THE FLYING WINDMILL

An
ANDY LANE
Story

EUSTACE L. ADAMS

"READING MAKETH A FULL MAN"...
Francis Bacon

THE SALVATION ARMY
FAIRMONT, MINN.

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THE FLYING WINDMILL

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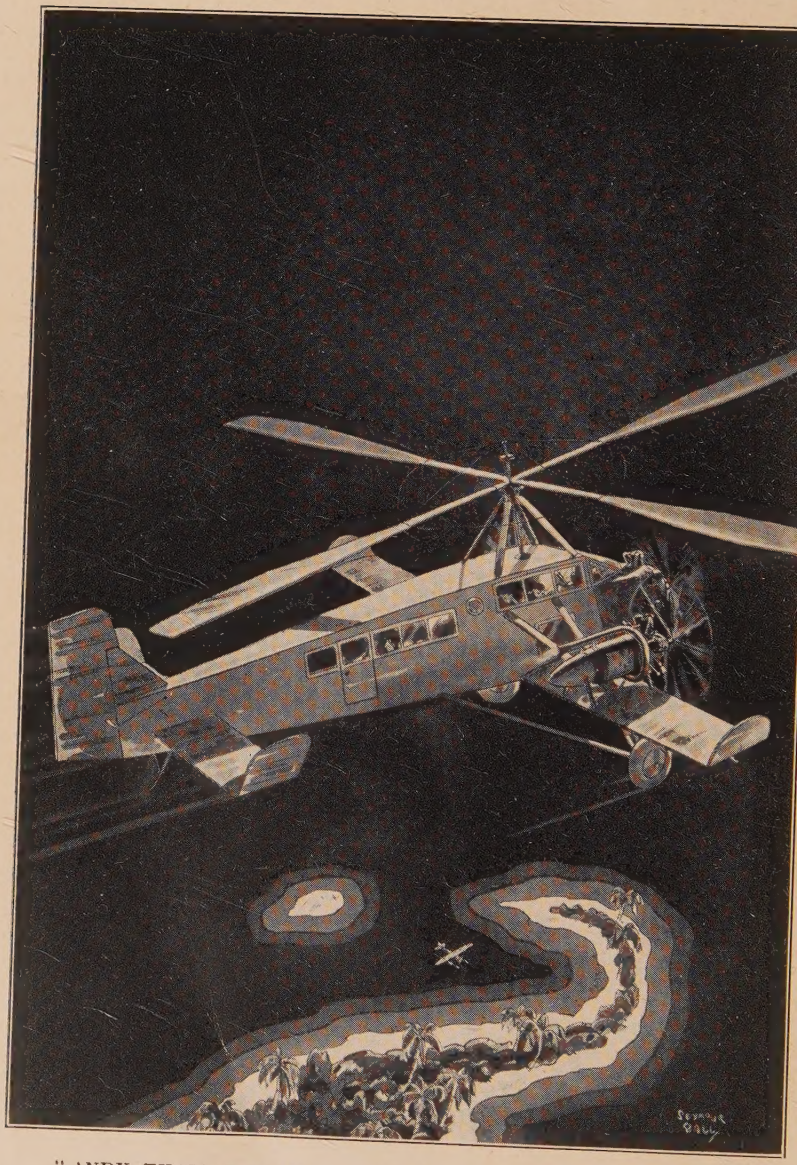

" ANDY, THAT'S THE ISLAND, ALL RIGHT, BUT THE MONOPLANE HAS BEATEN US TO IT!"

The Flying Windmill.

Frontispiece (*Page* 99)

THE FLYING WINDMILL

BY

EUSTACE L. ADAMS

Author of
FIFTEEN DAYS IN THE AIR
OVER THE POLAR ICE
RACING AROUND THE WORLD
THE RUNAWAY AIRSHIP
PIRATES OF THE AIR, ETC.

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THE FLYING WINDMILL

CHAPTER I

A CRASH ON THE ROAD

"Quick, Andy! Look down there!"

Sonny Collins' voice rose to an excited shriek as he leaned far out over the cockpit and pointed straight down toward the ground.

"Look! Look at those two cars!"

Andy Lane tilted his swift little monoplane far over on one wing and stared down the line of Sonny's pointing arm. Two cars were racing side by side along a wide ribbon of concrete that turned and twisted between the rolling hills of the countryside. Their speed was terrific. Occupying the full width of the road, they careened around turns at a whirlwind speed that threatened instant destruction to both.

The young pilot watched them for a moment, then cut the throttle of his powerful Apex engine and nosed his ship down in a dive that threatened to rip the silvery wings from her sleek, bullet-shaped body. In that single glance, Andy had seen something that was far more startling than a mere breakneck race between two road hogs. Clinging to the running board of the car which roared along the middle of the road was a man who pointed with one hand toward the driver of the other car. And from something which glistened in the pointing hand there darted a tiny knife-stab of crimson flame.

"He's shooting, Sonny!" shouted Andy, opening up his engine to give greater speed to the diving plane.

"Oh, Andy!" came Sonny's voice. "One of them has crashed!"

Andy looked down again just in time to see the car which had been racing on the right side of the road hurtle across the ditch and roll over and over in the field beside the highway. Then it came to a stop and was immediately hidden by a huge cloud of dust. The other car swerved

from side to side as its driver jammed on the emergency brake. It skidded to a stop, then began to roll swiftly backward toward the wrecked car.

The pilot in the diving plane scanned the adjacent fields, searching for a landing place. But from horizon to horizon there was no piece of cleared land large enough for his fast little ship. Garden patches, clumps of woods and bowlder-strewn meadows spread for miles in every direction.

"There's nothing to do but to try the road," he muttered to himself.

The backing automobile had now come to a stop beside the ditch. Two men leaped from it and ran across the field to the overturned wreck. As Andy leveled out for his dangerous landing, he could see the two men bending over a still, limp figure. Then they rose and dashed at full speed back to their waiting automobile, which immediately got under way and raced up the road at ever-increasing speed.

It was odd, Andy thought, that they had not carried the injured man with them, to take him

to the nearest hospital. But he had no time to puzzle out the mystery, for the road was swinging up toward the gliding plane with tremendous speed. On the left side of the concrete surface was a wide ditch, partially filled with water. On the other side was a series of telegraph poles, which offered a barrier as dangerous as a huge picket fence. Dozens of gleaming copper wires drooped from pole to pole, all the way to the horizon ahead. Fortunately the wind was blowing almost straight down the road.

"Watch yourself, Sonny," yelled Andy. "This may be a crash!"

The song of the wind through wires and struts dwindled to a murmur as Andy lifted the nose of the plane. He headed down toward the edge of the road that was nearest the ditch. For a few heartbreaking seconds it seemed to Sonny that the left wheel must drop over the edge while the other rolled along the smooth highway. The right wing tip almost brushed the telegraph wires. Then, with a quick little sideslip and a skillful kick at the rudder pedal,

Andy swung both wheels to the concrete, just on the ragged edge of safety. There was a soft jar as the shock absorbers took up the impact of landing. Then the plane rolled to a stop.

"Whew!" gasped Sonny, his brown eyes very large behind the horn-rimmed glasses. "That took years off my life."

Andy Lane did not answer. He jerked his safety belt loose and leaped from the cockpit.

"Come on," he shouted, "let's see what we can do for this injured man!"

As Andy sped across the wide strip of concrete and headed toward the crumpled wreck of the motor car, his passenger bent over and snapped the safety buckle which secured a tan-and-white collie dog to his special compartment in the cockpit of the plane. The dog whined and wagged his tail, eager to leap to the ground.

"Let's go, Scotty," said Sonny, vaulting over the edge of the cockpit.

With a scramble and a leap the famous fly-

ing dog jumped to the ground and was off in a brown streak after his master, Andy Lane. Sonny ran after him, dreading what he might see beneath that overturned mass of steel at the end of the two deep ruts in the soft ground.

Andy was bending over the unconscious figure of a man who lay just beside the wreck. With swift fingers the flyer was unbuttoning the man's coat and shirt. Then he placed his ear close to the bare chest. He nodded in relief.

"He's breathing, Sonny," he said, "and his pulse seems strong."

There was no sign of a wound on the man's body. Andy lifted his arms and legs, moving them carefully to see if there were any fractures. Then, suddenly, Andy turned to his friend.

"Sonny," he called, "look inside that car. Maybe there's another passenger in it or under it."

Sonny moved hastily to the wreck. What had been a heavy, eight-cylinder sedan was now a twisted, useless thing which would lie

out in the weather until it rusted to powder. He peered within the shattered tonneau and crawled under its hood. To his tremendous relief there was no sign that any others had been riding in it when the crash had come.

The collie dog was running this way and that, his nose close to the ground. The soft fur of his neck was ruffled, his long, bushy tail was held rigid. He was growling softly, deep down in his throat. As Sonny emerged from beneath the wreck, Scotty bounded toward the road, barking at the top of his voice, looking down the highway in the direction taken by the two men who had hurried away.

"Sonny," called Andy, "grab this man's feet. I'll take his shoulders. We'll fly him to the nearest hospital. I can't find anything the matter with him except for a bump the size of an egg on the back of his head."

Just as the two began to lift the stranger, his closed eyelids lifted and he gazed about him in astonishment. He stared at Andy and Sonny, then turned his head and looked around at the landscape. His eyes fell on the wreck

of his machine. Then he seemed to remember.

"Put me down, please, boys," he groaned. "I'll be all right. Put me down."

Andy and Sonny lowered him again to the ground. The man sat up, shook his head dizzily and then began to feel in the inside pocket of his coat. It was evident that he had not found what he was searching for, because his hands began to dig hastily into one pocket after another.

"It's gone," he declared at last, looking at the boys as though he expected them to know all about it.

"That's too bad, sir," said Andy, soothingly. "But at least you got out of a bad mess with nothing but a bumped head. That's something."

"I might have known they'd get it," said the man in a discouraged tone. "It would have been easier to have given it to them in the first place."

"Give *whom* what?" asked Sonny, curiously.

The man's eyes looked at the two boys as though he had not seen them before. They were

honest blue eyes, a little confused now, and surveyed the features of Andy and Sonny with the greatest care. Then, suddenly, they turned to the road and saw Andy's airplane there. Once again the man studied the faces which looked down at him.

"I know who you are," he said at last. "You're the famous flyer, Andy Lane." He turned to Sonny. "And you are the young radio operator, Sonny Collins."

The boys smiled and nodded. They were not surprised that they should have been recognized. Indeed, it was exceedingly difficult for them to go anywhere, nowadays, without having someone whisper their names and thus start a procession of curious people who would follow the two young heroes around until they dodged into some building to escape.

"Yes," nodded the man, thoughtfully, "I've seen your pictures in the news reels so often I feel as though I'd met you both a dozen times." He fell silent and there was something in his expression that kept the boys from speaking. He seemed to be wrestling with a

serious problem. At last his face cleared. "Listen, I have a very queer story to tell you. Sit down here for a few minutes. You won't be wasting your time."

Andy was astonished at the man's request. But he sat down on the grass and Sonny took his place beside him. A cold, wet muzzle pushed itself into Andy's hand and Scotty crouched close beside his master, his large brown eyes fixed upon the face of the stranger.

"Now I know I can't be wrong," smiled the man. "That's Scotty, the dog who has flown on all your great adventures. All right, now, listen to me. I haven't told anyone in the world, with one exception, what I'm going to tell you now. And the only reason I'm telling you is that you are Andy Lane, the boy who is known all over the world for his honesty, courage and ability."

Andy's face became pink, but he held his peace. Sonny was unkind enough to nudge the older boy with his elbow, which did not increase Andy's peace of mind. He always became red when people started to praise him.

"Another reason I'm telling you this," continued the man, "is that I know you have both made so much money out of prizes and rewards that another million wouldn't worry you very much."

Andy sat upright in astonishment. A stranger, sitting out here in the countryside, discussing a million dollars! Had the man's bump affected his brain? But Andy was too courteous to ask.

"The men who shot at me and caused my car to careen into the field here," said the man, quietly, "have just robbed me of something that is worth more than a million dollars."

Sonny's eyes grew large and round. He glanced toward his friend, but Andy was sitting quietly, studying the stranger's face.

"Yes, more than a million dollars. No one knows how much more. Maybe two or three millions. Tell me, you boys, have you ever heard of Blackbeard?"

"Sure," said Sonny, immediately. "When I was a very little kid I used to read about him in Grimm's Fairy Tales."

"That's Bluebeard, ivory head," laughed Andy. "Do you mean Blackbeard, the pirate?"

"Yes."

"I've heard of him," nodded Andy. "He did a lot of rough work on our Southern coast and down in the Caribbean, didn't he?"

"Yes. And those two thieves have just stolen a plan showing where he buried a lot of his loot."

Sonny whistled. Andy's expression did not change.

"That's a hard one to believe, isn't it?" asked the man, looking at Andy. The boy nodded. "All right. Now that it's gone, I can't prove it to you. You'll have to take my word for it. Listen; six months ago I was searching through some old things in a trunk that belonged to my grandfather. He was a sea captain, who owned and sailed a clipper ship out of Salem in the China trade. I found an old notebook, faded, discolored and dog-eared. It contained a number of his accounts. Upon one of the pages was a notation that he had befriended a seaman named Thomas Catlin

who was sick and broke in Shanghai. The man died and left my grandfather a map which he claimed showed an island in the Bahamas where Blackbeard had buried some of his loot."

"Why didn't your grandfather go and try to dig it up?" asked Andy, practically.

"He intended to. But he was lost at sea on his next trip to China. My father was a plain business man. He wasn't much interested in Grandfather's things and, so far as I know, never went through the Captain's trunk. I discovered the notebook and was interested. When I saw the map I began to make inquiries. I found that Blackbeard actually did operate in the Caribbean and that it is thought he buried treasure in several places in the West Indies."

"How did those men happen to steal your map?" Andy asked. "Did they just hold you up and take everything you had, or were they after the map itself?"

"They were after the map. And they got it. I never saw the two before, but I know whom

they were working for. I went to a man to get him to form a small party to go down there after the treasure. I didn't have the money and I knew that I would not be able to go myself, so I trusted him too far. He double-crossed me. Now he'll go down there and dig up the treasure himself and instead of getting a fifty-fifty split, he'll get it all."

"Why can't you go down there yourself?" asked Andy.

"I'll tell you honestly," answered the man looking straight at the flyer. "I don't know whether there's any treasure there or not. Most of those wild treasure stories turn out to be false alarms. I have a wife who is an invalid. I cannot leave her. I know that a treasure hunt might take months and months. I would rather lose a treasure that may not be there at all than be away from my wife for even a week."

Andy's eyes took on a sparkle of excitement. He had not taken the man seriously until he had said that it was quite possible that the treasure did not exist. If the thing had been

a swindle of some kind, the man would never have admitted even the possibility of error.

"Why are you telling us this?" Andy asked, quietly.

"I want you to find that treasure for me," said the man. "If I didn't know all about you, you can bet that I'd never have told you. But I know that you will keep your word. I want you to fly down to the Bahamas and look for that gold. If you find it you can have two-thirds of it. The other third will be mine because I am the only one who knows where it is." Then he added, with a very worried expression, "That isn't true. I'm not the only one who knows about it. Henry Brewer's two thugs know about it and he'll know about it as soon as that car gets back to New York. And just as soon as Brewer can charter a boat he'll be down there digging it up. That's why I want you to fly—to beat him to it."

Andy remembered the man who had stood on the running board, shooting at this man who sat there before him now. Men did not shoot at each other for nothing. Nor did they wreck

big cars for the fun of it. This was not just a silly story, to be forgotten in the next moment.

"If those fellows have gotten away with your map, Mr.——"

"Briggs."

"—Mr. Briggs, how will you know where the treasure is?"

"I've studied it for six months!" exclaimed Mr. Briggs earnestly. "I've memorized every line. I could draw it so accurately that you'd never know it from the original. I always kept the old notebook in the safe so that I couldn't lose it. I had an engagement with this man Brewer to show him the map. I got it out of the safe and was taking it to him when his men stole it from me."

"Why don't you have him arrested?" asked Sonny.

"Don't worry," said the other with a hard laugh, "he will have hidden it away somewhere and I wouldn't be able to prove a thing."

"Tell you what we'll do," said Andy with sudden decision. "We'll take you back to New

York and we'll think the thing over. Maybe we'll talk it over with some of the boys. If we decide we'd like to take it on, you can give us the rest of the dope then. How's that?"

"Fine!" agreed Mr. Briggs, but he seemed more than a little disappointed that the famous young flyers had not accepted his proposition at once.

Andy and Sonny helped him to his feet and took him to the Apex monoplane. In less than five minutes they were zooming into the air and banking around toward the flying field at Mineola.

CHAPTER II

A NEW KIND OF PLANE

It was not quite daybreak on the following morning when Andy, Sonny and the mascot, Scotty, slid down to the broad landing field at Mineola. The gray shadows were chasing each other across the mile-long expanse of turf. The mammoth factory of the Apex Aeroplane and Motor Corporation, which stood at one edge of the field, was already bathed in the first pink lights of the sunrise, yet despite the fact that the regular work would not begin for nearly three hours, one whole end of the building blazed with electric lights.

Andy taxied his air yacht over the grass to the lighted end of the factory and cut the engine. He yawned, stretched and rubbed the sleep out of his eyes.

"How do you manage to be so wakeful at this

hour of the morning, Sonny?" he demanded, throwing one leg over the edge of the cockpit.

"It's a gift, like being able to wiggle your ears," the slim, bespectacled youth told him gravely.

"Then I'll never acquire your gift," laughed the other, dropping to the ground. "The only time I can stay awake at daybreak is when I'm doing my trick at the wheel on a long flight. Then I get used to it, somehow. Come on, let's go in. By all the lights in the factory it looks as though the *Flying Windmill* was ready to hop off."

Sonny unhooked Scotty's safety belt and tossed him over the side of the cockpit. The dog squirmed in the air like a cat, landed on all fours and bounded across the grass toward his master, barking and nipping at the famous flyer's legs as though he knew that something very unusual were afoot.

"Andy, did you decide about the treasure hunt?" asked Sonny, catching up with the older boy.

"No, and I hardly slept a wink thinking

about it," confessed Andy. "It sounds just too wild to be true. I don't dare tell Sam and Joe and the rest about it. They'd think we had lost our minds. It would be a wonderful stunt, though, if we could dig up all that buried gold and whether we found it or not, we'd have a wonderful time looking for it."

Sonny looked very disappointed.

"If it weren't for the work on the *Flying Windmill,*" continued Andy, "I'd be tempted to fly down to Hook Island and see if Mr. Briggs is as foolish as he sounds. But this new plane is just about the most important thing the Apex Company has tackled in a long time. I'm drawing down a perfectly crazy salary for being vice president and consulting engineer and I really ought to do something about earning it. I don't see how I can get away."

Sonny opened his mouth as if to argue, but they had reached the factory door and there was no time. Andy led the way as they entered a huge, hangar-like room which occupied one entire end of the building. At first glance the great room seemed absolutely filled with

airplanes of every kind and description. All of them were complete and ready to go, for this was the delivery room where finished jobs were rolled from the main part of the factory when they were ready for their flying tests.

At one end of the vast hall were a whole brood of tiny, vicious-looking Army scouts, which were snuggled under the wing of a tremendous biplane that looked large enough to carry a dozen of the smaller ships within her cabin. She bore a famous name on her huge cabin, for this was the great *Apex No. 1*,[1] which had carried Andy Lane and his daring crew on the first of their many record-breaking flights. Andy looked at her and repressed a desire to step over to her and to pat her weather-stained fuselage. Had it not been for that first great flight, in which he and his crew had remained in the air for fifteen days and nights without touching wheels to the ground, the Apex factory might still be little larger than the one-story shed it had been before orders began to pour in as a result of the flight. Yes, that ship had

[1]See "Fifteen Days in the Air."

sold more Apex motors and Apex planes than all the salesmen of the organization combined.

Amphibians were there, too, looking very odd with their boat-shaped hulls and wheels which projected awkwardly from their sides. Over in one corner stood a mammoth bomber, built for the Navy from the designs of an Apex flying boat in which Andy and his pals had won the great race around the world.[2]

They looked very ghostly, these silent ships, which waited to take their turn in the air under the master hands of Apex test pilots. But Andy loved every one of them. They were, to his eyes, more beautiful than any painting which ever hung in a gallery.

"Look," exclaimed Sonny, clutching his friend's muscular arm, "they're opening the doors and rolling the *Flying Windmill* out!"

The two boys hastened their steps. Just inside the barn-like doors which opened on to the flying field, there was a scene of the greatest activity. A dozen mechanics were swarming over an extraordinary-looking plane while a

[2]See "Racing Around the World."

tiny tractor tugged at her, dragging her out of the building. Even Andy, who had watched the plane being built, could never look at her without surprise, for she resembled no ship that had ever before taken the air on anything but a short experimental flight.

Her fuselage and undercarriage looked something like an ordinary tri-motor cabin plane, but there was where all resemblance ceased. Her lower wing, if such it could be called, consisted merely of two struts projecting from her hull, and at the end of the struts were two ailerons which, in their shape, looked like overgrown tennis rackets. The stabilizer, near the tail, was bent upward at each end, looking as though careless mechanics had tried to lift the stern of the ship by pulling up on the tips and, in so doing, had bent them hopelessly.

But the oddest thing about the entire plane was the thing which took the place of the top wing. It looked for all the world like a mammoth, four-bladed fan fastened to the cabin roof by a four-legged support. The blades of the fan were tremendously long. The forward

blade projected far out beyond the bow, the rear almost to the tail. The other two extended out to each side almost as far as an ordinary wing tip.

"Every time I look at that thing," laughed Sonny, "it seems funnier and funnier!"

A very fat man who, in his loose suit of coveralls, looked almost like a Teddy bear, walked slowly after the rolling plane, surveying its queer lines with no little disgust. Andy and Sonny walked up to him and slapped him on the back.

"What's the matter, Sam Allen?" smiled Andy. "You look as though you had eaten something that didn't agree with you."

"Everything I eat agrees with me!" retorted the chief mechanic of the Apex factory. "But if that plane doesn't give me the heebie jeebies, nothing ever will. Last night I dreamed about it in my sleep and I got so upset I fell out of bed!"

Sonny and Andy roared with delight. When the first one-man autogyro had been tested out at the Apex field several months ago, Sam had

taken an instant dislike to it. The sight of the rapidly whirling blades made him dizzy, he said. He wanted to throw a dozen eggs into them to see what would happen. Beyond that, he was not interested. He refused to show his astonishment at the marvelous flying of the thing and had protested vigorously when Andy had recommended that the Apex Company buy the patents and construct a large model, with three engines and sufficient cabin room to hold a dozen passengers.

But nobody had taken the fat mechanic seriously. Everybody, from the president of the company down to the smallest grease boy, knew that Sam Allen always fussed about everything new. But his fussing did not prevent Sam from pitching in and working like a Trojan on the construction of the bigger ship. To have watched him working upon its three great Apex engines, one would never have known that the plane had not been constructed according to his own plans.

"Look at the way those fan blades droop,"

complained Sam. "They look all limp and tired."

"They'll straighten out when they start revolving," said Andy.

"I know it," nodded Sam. "But they look discouraged, just as though they were too feeble to start turning."

Andy was forced to admit that the windmill atop the cabin did not look right. The four long blades were fastened to the shaft at the center by a universal joint, or hinge, which permitted them to droop limply when at rest. He knew that when they started to turn, they would straighten out as rigidly as a stone at the end of a whirling string. It was this very flexibility that permitted the blades to automatically adjust themselves to bumps in the air when in flight. But it did look odd, to say the least.

"I suppose we've got to test the silly thing now," said Sam, as they walked out on the field.

"You don't have to go," Andy reminded him. "We can get one of the other mechanics to watch the motors."

"Just let me see you go up without me, Andy Lane!" roared Sam. "I've been up in crazier things than that and you know it. Why, after riding in a flaming rocket plane all over the face of the earth that thing looks safer than a hospital bed."[3]

"All right, Sam," agreed Andy, who had known all along that Sam would never consent to being left on the ground. "Is Joe Lamson here?"

"You bet. We've been here all night working on the last-minute odds and ends. Joe's in the cockpit right now tracing the lead wires."

"How soon can we start?" asked Sonny.

Sam stooped suddenly, with amazing speed for one so fat. He swept Scotty into the crook of his left arm and proceeded to ruffle his soft fur.

"Hello, you flying pooch," he said. "You're getting almost too big to be a mascot any longer. You eat too much and there's only room for one big eater aboard Apex ships. And that's me, hound."

Scotty squirmed around in Sam's huge arms,

[3]See "On the Wings of Flame."

trying to lick his face. But Sam held him tightly, despite the dog's long, awkward legs and body. The two were fast friends. The dog remembered the pounds and pounds of tender meat that Sam had given him on long flights, while the mechanic remembered a number of occasions when Scotty's watchful eyes and ears had saved Apex crews from disaster.[4]

The plane had come to a stop now, at the edge of the field. The tractor had waddled back into the factory hangar. The mechanics, having nothing else to do, were idly swabbing the plane's gleaming sides with white cotton rags. Everything was ready.

[4]See "Over the Polar Ice."

CHAPTER III

ABOARD THE "FLYING WINDMILL"

THE mechanic, the two boys and the dog stepped to the side of the great ship, mounted a short stepladder and entered the main cabin.

"Gee, this looks small, compared to the fifty-passenger transatlantic Apex,"[1] murmured Sonny.

"Yes, but it's as big as most of the twenty-passenger planes that are in use on the trans-continental air routes," Andy reminded him. "Let's give her a final inspection before we start the engines."

He walked along a narrow corridor toward the bow and entered the control room, or pilot's room.

"Hello, Andy!" came a quiet voice from a grave-faced, calm-eyed young man who, on his

[1]See "Pirates of the Air."

hands and knees, was engaged in examining the braided wire control leads. This was Joe Lamson, who, as chief test pilot for the factory, had been co-pilot on all of the record-breaking hops made by Andy and his crew. He was nearly ten years older than Andy Lane, and, because of his marvelous flying ability, his knowledge of navigation and his all-round dependability, he had been a tower of strength in every emergency. When the control wheel was in Joe Lamson's capable hands, the ship was as safe as any plane could ever be.

"She's ready to hop off," said Joe, rising, and surveying the room with his serious, level gray eyes. "She's a funny-looking crock, but I think she'll surprise us by doing more different stunts than any other plane ever did before."

There was a hollow groan from Sam.

"I don't want planes to do stunts," he said sourly. "I like them to fly fast and straight. That's all."

And with that, Sam put Scotty down on the floor and retreated to the rear of the cabins to

examine some mechanical contrivance that he thought might need his attention.

"If you couldn't see that windmill blade sticking forward above our heads," said Andy, "you'd never know that this wasn't an ordinary ship."

He glanced at the two comfortable chairs placed behind the dual control wheels, at the familiar groups of instruments, gauges and dials on the instrument board in front of the wheels and at all the other gleaming and polished things within the compact little room. He glanced out of the non-shatterable glass windows that formed three walls and the roof. Yes, it looked very much like the control room of any other tri-motored ship of her size, except that the familiar expanse of top wing outside was replaced by the four awkward-looking blades of the rotating windmill above.

"Let's go and look at the radio room," suggested Sonny.

Leaving Joe to continue his last-minute inspection, Andy and Sonny walked back through the corridor. The first door to the right led

into a tiny cabin, completely furnished with a folding berth, a desk, dresser and chairs. This was the captain's sleeping room and office. Andy's eyes shone with pride as he looked at it. This comfortable little room was to be his during all the long and short experimental flights of the big new ship. He was going to fly again, to hurtle through the skies, to fight storms, and to spend days and nights with Sonny and Sam and Joe, with whom he had already shared such marvelous adventures. That was life. Nothing could be more fun.

The next cabin was Sonny's radio room, where the boy had already spent hours on end installing a small but very efficient sending and receiving set. Andy knew that the lad would spend every spare moment in this room, his ear phones clamped on his head, his slim, nervous fingers twirling the dials. Good little Sonny! Despite the four years' difference in their ages, the two had been friends for many, many years. And because Sonny was one of the most expert radio amateurs in the entire world, he had acted as radio operator on most

of the long flights taken by Apex ships. His familiar call letters had been heard by friends of the ether in nearly every country in the world. His messages from Apex ships had been relayed to Mineola from all four corners of the globe. No, Andy could not imagine starting on a flight without Sonny at the sending key.

Next came a cabin which would be shared by Joe and Sam in their off-duty hours. There were two berths, an upper and a lower, with furnishings as comfortable as those in Andy's own cabin. On previous flights, the crews had been larger. An assistant mechanic and another pilot had been carried. But since the *Flying Windmill* was not intended for anything but comparatively short experimental flights, she had been designed to accommodate a crew of four in comfort rather than extra men who would have to be crowded into her capacious fuselage.

Beyond this room was a large, bright cabin which extended the full width of the ship. This was the combination living and dining room.

It was furnished with wicker chairs and tables, all gayly painted and making the place look more like a comfortably furnished sun porch than the cabin of an airplane. The chairs were upholstered in red and black chintzes. All the wicker work was lacquered a vivid red. The balsa-wood paneling of the walls was enameled in a deep shade of ivory. Wall brackets and a frosted dome in the ceiling were still lighted, although the morning sun was now flooding the field outside with its brilliance. Andy snapped off the switches.

"It's certainly a pleasant room, Sonny," he said. "We'll have some good times here while we're finding out whether it will pay to build these ships in commercial quantities."

In an alcove at the rear of the living cabin was a completely equipped kitchenette. A three-burner electric stove, an electric refrigerator and wall racks of gleaming pots and pans made the little place look extremely efficient.

"I'll bet Sam has the time of his life here," laughed Andy. "Look, he's put in his pro-

visions already, even though he doesn't know whether we'll decide to make a long hop to-day or not! Here's salt, pepper, sugar, flour, vegetables—you might have known that Sam would take care not to miss a meal!"

"You never said a truer word, Andy!" came Sam's hearty voice from the door. "If there's anything in the world that gives me an attack of the twitches, it's not knowing when I'm going to get my next meal. So when I heard you say that if a short hop was successful we might make a long one, I thought I'd stock up. I haven't forgotten a thing. And by the way, Andy, what do you say to a little breakfast when we get up in the air? It's so long since I've cooked a meal in a ship that I crave to throw some things into a frying pan and smell them sizzling."

"Great idea," applauded Andy. "But in the meanwhile, let's be taking off. If we wait much longer, the newspaper men will be clustering around and we won't be able to avoid them."

"We are ready right now," declared Sam.

"Good. Let's go. Everybody get parachutes on. Remember that this is a test flight."

They all climbed into their clumsy parachute harnesses and went to their stations. Sonny, taking Scotty with him, went into his office, impatient for the ship to leave the ground so that he might unreel his antenna wire. Sam, an open-mouthed bag of tools around his neck, stood by the door. If trouble developed with any one of the three engines, he had but to step out to one of a series of three catwalks which led to the engines. Thus, as on all the other great Apex flights, he would be able to adjust, and even repair, any of his engines while in flight.

Joe was already in his pilot's seat. Andy took his place beside him. They had each taken lessons in flying these strange autogyros, but they were aware that a ship three times as large as the one they had learned on might act very differently in the air.

Andy pressed the starter switches and all three engines began to click and whir. First one, then another, burst into life, back-fired

and popped for a moment, then began to run sweetly, roaring and muttering in turn as Andy opened and closed the throttle.

The pilot pulled a little lever not unlike the gear shift on a motor car, which connected the center engine to the shaft of the windmill. Slowly at first, then faster and faster, the three great vanes began to rotate. Andy watched them carefully. When they were whirling sufficiently fast, he disconnected the center engine. He waved to the little group of mechanics on the ground. They scattered. He pushed forward on the throttle, just as though he were starting for the take-off in an ordinary plane. The great fabric of the ship trembled. She rolled slowly ahead over the grass. But hardly had she begun to move when Andy pulled back on the control wheel. Instantly the fat rubber tires of the landing wheel left the ground. The bow rose and the *Flying Windmill* began to climb at an angle that would have thrown an ordinary ship into an instant stall. But she did not hesitate. Up, up, she climbed at an astonishing speed.

Andy's heart beat fast. This ship's actions were so contrary to those of the planes which he had flown so many thousands of miles that he was tempted time and time again to nose down lest she stall and slip into a tail spin. But she climbed steadily, her three engines roaring.

The altimeter read two thousand feet when Andy leveled her out. Then she began to pick up forward speed. Now she handled exactly like any other ship. Except for the flashing arc of the whirling vanes overhead, he would never have known that he was handling an autogyro. The speed indicator crept forward to one hundred and twenty-five miles an hour. Then to one hundred and fifty. That seemed to be her top speed in still air.

Around and around the great flying field she flew, while Andy became accustomed to the feel of her controls. Then he cut the engines and, instead of nosing down into a glide, he held the wheel back against his chest. Instinctively he and Joe braced themselves for a tail spin. Instead, the great ship began to settle down

gradually, slowly, in an almost vertical descent. Andy held her there, marveling, and watched the altimeter drop to fifteen hundred, one thousand and then five hundred, with practically no forward speed.

At five hundred feet he opened the three engines so that they ran at about a third of their full power. There was still not sufficient forward speed to keep the plane from descending, but she moved slowly ahead, settling gradually. At last they were within fifty feet of the landing field. Andy opened the motors a little more. The air-speed meter now showed only thirty miles an hour, yet the plane was flying evenly, holding her altitude. She seemed to almost float along over the ground.

They were approaching the edge of the field. The Apex factory loomed up ahead of them, its tall smokestack far above the altitude at which the ship was flying. Andy gave the engines a bit more gas, pulled back on the wheel and the great plane rose like a balloon over the towering stacks.

Joe Lamson, who had been sitting perfectly

rigid during the first few moments of the remarkable flight, whooped with delight.

"I never saw anything like it in my life!" he laughed. "Why, we could have landed her right on the roof!"

"You take her," grinned Andy.

Joe took the controls and began to duplicate the stunts that Andy had tried. At last he cut the engines when the ship was over the middle of the field. The revolving vanes kept on whirling as the upward rising air passed the slowly descending plane. Slowly, steadily, she sank, while Joe held the control wheel hard back. The field seemed to float up toward them, growing closer and closer with each passing instant. The watching spectators mushroomed in size as the plane settled. Then, at last, the tail skid touched the ground. The strange craft sat down like a tired hen, her wheels striking with a bump. But there she was, after a vertical descent!

Joe grinned at Andy and opened the throttles again. Once more the queer-looking ship began to climb almost straight in the air. Joe

made a motion as if to turn the controls over to Andy, but the boy shook his head.

"I'm satisfied with her, Joe," he said. "I'd go anywhere in her."

"So would I," agreed the pilot.

"Now let's just fly around for a couple of hours to be sure that there aren't any defects in her which flying will bring out. Then we'll take her to the factory, make our report and decide what to do next."

"If that's the case," broke in Sam, appearing in the control room, "why don't we try to chew something?"

"Hungry Sam wants to eat at every pause in the conversation," laughed Andy. "Well, it isn't a bad idea at that. Tell you what let's do, Sam. I have an idea that I want to pop at you. This control room is big enough so that we can all squeeze into it at the same time if Sam doesn't breathe too hard. Bring your breakfasts in on a tray, Sam. We'll eat them out here where we can see how the plane behaves and talk over our plan at the same time."

"Fair enough," beamed Sam.

CHAPTER IV

ANDY TAKES A VOTE

"How would you birds like to go hunting for a couple of million dollars' treasure?" asked Andy, when all four flyers had squeezed into the control room to eat a delicious breakfast of fried eggs, broiled bacon, toast and coffee.

Sam balanced a cup on his knees, reached over and placed his finger around Andy's sunbronzed wrist.

"His pulse seems all right," he said gravely, "but he sounds feverish."

"I'm not feverish," declared Andy, working the control wheel with one hand and using his fork with the other. "I have a map in my pocket which is supposed to show an island in the Bahama group where a million or two dollars in gold is buried."

"Let's go and dig it up," said Joe, quietly.

"If you are heading for there now," said Sam in an alarmed voice, "I'm going to open the cabin door, place my finger in the release ring of my parachute and let you all come and kiss me good-by before I jump. Of all the wild-eyed, addle-pated, dumb Dora ideas I've ever heard, this beats all! We're flyers, not gold diggers. We all have more money than we know what to do with and now we have to go hunting for more."

He stopped, with his mouth opening and closing like a trout's, and looked toward Sonny for moral support. But the youngster, who was in on Andy's secret, merely looked at the mechanic and grinned. Joe was devoting himself to capturing the last of a bit of egg that seemed on the point of slipping off the edge of his plate.

"Treasure hunting," moaned the pessimistic Sam. "If that isn't just another word for trouble, I'm a flat-footed kiwi! Listen, did you ever read Treasure Island, or any of the other books about hunting for buried gold?"

"So you really *can* read, after all, Sam?" asked Joe, innocently.

"Listen, rubber-face," retorted Sam, "it's all right for you to sit there and make those wheezes, but you don't know what it's all about. Did you ever read about a treasure-digging party that wasn't chased all over the vacant lot by a lot of bloodthirsty natives, or pirates, or something, with daggers and guns and everything? No, sir, if we want trouble, we can find it some other way."

"When do we start, Andy?" asked Joe, paying not the slightest attention to Sam's bleats.

"Well, the folks at the factory want us to take this ship off on a cruise, so that we can test her out thoroughly away from the public's eye. Mr. Avery, the president of the company, suggested that we take her up to Canada somewhere and play around with her a couple of weeks until we know her inside out and are able to make recommendations for improving her in case it is decided to build more like her."

"Brrrr," shivered Sam. "It's September and the weather is getting cold up there now.

I never did like cold weather. Remember the last time we were up there? I nearly——"

"Now what I had in mind," continued Andy, not listening to Sam, "was that we make our test flight to the south instead of north. We'll follow the most direct route to Miami, hop over to the Bahamas and find this island. Then we'll take a few days' vacation while we're digging. If we find the money, all right. If we don't, we've had a nice time."

"Sounds good to me," replied Joe. "Tell us what the treasure is all about."

Andy told them briefly of the stirring events connected with the crashing of the racing motor car and the strange tale told by the man, Briggs. He told them how Briggs had drawn a sketch from memory, showing the shape of the island and the supposed location of the treasure. He warned them that the man's memory might not be accurate and that they might not even find the island, to say nothing of the treasure itself. He also mentioned the possibility of another searching party appearing on the island and finding the treasure.

"So that's why I thought of starting right away," he concluded, "to beat them to the job. They could have taken the train south last night, you know. In that case they'd be in Miami to-morrow morning. They could charter a boat and be at this Hook Island place to-morrow night or the next morning at the latest. So if we're going into it at all, we'd better step on the gas."

"But we'd need some time to get things together," objected Sam. "It'll be hot down there, you know. We'll need light clothes, a two weeks' supply of food——"

"Why all the food?" demanded Sonny.

"Because most of those islands are uninhabited and have no more things to eat on them than you'll find on top of the South Pole. Besides, we'll have to have picks and shovels, maybe a couple of sticks of dynamite, ropes and—oh, lots and lots of things."

"And a couple of automatic pistols," added Joe, firmly. "I hear that our old friend Brewster has escaped from jail in London and while that bird is loose, I don't start any long flights without a gun or two."

"Right you are, Joe," agreed Andy. "I've been shot at enough by that crook without being able to shoot back."

For an instant they were all silent, gazing down on the gently rolling hills of Long Island, as they thought of the number of times their paths had crossed with Herbert Brewster. Time after time, their enemy had caused them untold troubles and had done his best to kill them. The man was a wonderful flyer, daring and unscrupulous. Ever since Apex ships began to make record-breaking trips, Brewster's ambition had been to cause them disaster, for he had never forgotten that Andy Lane and Sonny Collins had exposed his dishonesty and caused all honest men to shun him. It had been Andy and his companions who had finally forced Brewster, the air pirate, down at sea, where he had fallen into the hands of the British Government.[1] And now he had escaped from prison! Andy shivered, as though a cloud had passed over the sun.

"Well, let's take a vote now. If we're going after that treasure, I'd like to start this very

[1]See "The Mysterious Monoplane."

afternoon. We have most of the equipment we used for flying over the tropics in our 'round-the-world race. It's all in storage at the factory. We can draw the tools and things out of stock at the plant. We can load up the food supplies in an hour's time. I'm sure I can get Mr. Avery to permit us to go. So let's vote on it. Who'd like to go?"

"Me!" shouted Sonny, so loudly that Scotty, who had just fallen asleep, jumped up and barked in excitement.

"Good," smiled Andy. "I have two recruits, Sonny and Scotty."

"I'm in," declared Joe.

"Between you all, you've crowned me Queen of the May," mourned Sam. "You know I won't let you fly off without me. It would spoil your luck. You'd have forced landings every three-and-a-half miles. Your gas tanks would leak and you'd find your food all spoiled in the lockers. You'd break out with the seven-year itch and——"

"That's enough!" roared Andy. "Are you with us or not?"

"Why, of course," answered Sam, "and you knew it all the time!"

"Great stuff! All right, then, it's all decided. We'll go back to the factory now. There's no danger in a little hop to the Bahamas, so I'll just jump into my own plane, dash home to say good-by to Mother and Dad and we'll be off as soon as possible. Joe and Sam can check over the plane and Sonny can attend to the buying of the food."

"Yes," agreed Sonny. "My father is in California, so I won't be able to say good-by to him. I might as well work as loaf."

"Yow!" exclaimed Joe, breaking into one of his rare smiles. "So we're off again, eh, fellows? Well, well, that's great! As long as we fly with Andy, there's always something doing."

They turned back toward the factory in the highest of spirits. Had any of them realized what dangers were awaiting them on a sun-drenched island of the Caribbean, they might have hesitated in making their decision so promptly!

CHAPTER V

THE TAKE-OFF

Mr. Ronald Avery, president of the Apex Aeroplane and Motor Corporation, stared at his nineteen-year-old vice president in astonishment.

"What's the idea of the mystery, Andy?" he asked. "You know well enough that you may fly anywhere you want to. But suppose something should happen to you? How would we know where to start looking for you?"

"I'd be tickled to death to tell you where we were going, Mr. Avery," Andy assured him, "except that we gave the man our word of honor that nobody should know except the crew of the plane who were actually to take part in the flight. It will not be a dangerous flight. It is over civilization for the most part and we have a water jump of less than one

hundred and fifty miles. So you see you needn't worry about us at all. We'll be back within a couple of weeks. We have the radio, you know, and if anything happens to us we can always send a message to you. But if you have the slightest worry about the safety of the *Flying Windmill,* we can borrow one of the old ships."

"No," said Mr. Avery. "I'd rather you took the autogyro for a real test. If she proves to be a type we want to manufacture, I'd like the shake-down cruise to be made at once."

He fell silent for a moment, then rose and placed his hand on Andy's shoulder.

"Go ahead, son," he said. "Get in touch with me by radio as soon as you can. I know you boys will be able to take care of yourselves. You've proved that a dozen times. Go ahead and go treasure hunting if you'll enjoy it. It will be a good vacation for you, anyway, and you all need one."

Ten minutes later, Andy was standing in the main cabin of the *Flying Windmill.* Sonny, Joe and Sam were crowded around him, wait-

vcing anxiously to hear Mr. Avery's decision.

"It's all right, gang," said Andy. "Mr. Avery says we can use this ship. How soon can we be ready?"

Joe looked at his watch.

"It is three o'clock now," he said. "We can take off in an hour."

"Fine!" grinned Andy. "The sooner the better."

They all fell to work at top speed. After many long trips in Apex ships, each knew what to do. Sam checked his motors and gathered together a tremendous array of spare parts, tools, and odds and ends for use in repairing any possible damage to the ship. Sonny and Andy made themselves responsible for general supplies and provisions. With the assistance of workmen from the factory, they loaded into the plane sufficient foodstuffs to last two weeks. They ransacked the storerooms of the factory, where were kept clothing, utensils and flying equipment purchased for previous long flights. They found plenty of tropical clothing from the kits used on the 'round-the-world flight. They

found pickaxes, shovels and ropes from the lockers in which the equipment was stored after their return from the magnificent flight over the South Pole. They found and tested a collapsible rubber rowboat which they had carried on many of their trips over the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. They were like two small boys rummaging through a pile of Christmas presents, laughing and shouting as they found things that might be of use to them, stopping to remind each other of stirring adventures of which they were reminded by various pieces of equipment.

"I just can't believe that the old gang is hopping again, Andy," exclaimed Sonny, joyfully. "I can't help wishing, though, that it was another flight around the world, or another jump to Europe instead of just to a little island not far from the Florida coast line!"

"Yes, there's something about flying a hundred miles an hour and going on and on," agreed Andy. "There's a terrific thrill to watching strange countries slide under your wings, and looking down on funny little towns

and queer people. I hope this long-distance flying of ours won't spoil us for ever staying at home."

"I wouldn't care if it did," declared the youngster. "The oftener we start long flights, the better I'll like it."

"In the meantime," said Andy, recalling the boy to his task, "how's that check list? Have we everything now that it calls for?"

"Every single thing and all in the proper lockers, too."

"Well, then, our job is about over. As soon as Joe and Sam finish their jobs, we'll be ready to go."

They found Joe carefully inspecting every bolt, nut, cutter pin and rivet in the fuselage, undercarriage and rotating vanes.

"Did you put your artillery aboard, Joe?" asked Andy.

"Yes, *sir!*" said Joe. "An automatic apiece and plenty of ammunition. I'd have taken a machine gun along, too, if you fellows hadn't loaded the ship all up with stuff."

"You're getting bloodthirsty," laughed Andy.

"No. Just careful. I'm tired of having birds shoot at me and not be able to do something more than to blow kisses at them."

Sam clambered down from a stepladder. He was covered with grease and engine oil from head to foot, but he looked absolutely happy.

"What do you say, Andy?" he said. "The motors are just itching to start."

"So am I," agreed the young captain. "Let's go."

He whistled to Scotty, who had been dozing in the shadow of the plane. The pup scrambled to his feet, yawned lustily and jumped into the open door of the cabin.

"He knows his place," commented Andy. Then, turning to a motorcycle policeman who stood near, he said, "We're ready to go now, officer."

With a tremendous popping of his engine, the policeman roared across the field. Behind long ropes which were stretched on each side of the landing space, great crowds had already assembled to see their national hero take off. Nobody knew how the news had leaked out, but there had been headlines in the early after-

noon editions of the New York papers stating that Andy Lane and his famous crew were tuning up a machine for an immediate take-off. That had been enough. By motor car, bus and train, people had hastened to the field. The police were well prepared for their coming and, remembering occasions when the crowd had broken through the lines and swarmed over the field, extra details of men were on duty, walking up and down the lines and watching carefully for the first sign of a stampede.

Newspaper reporters crowded about the four flyers. Andy was shaking hands with the factory workers who, by their care and hard labor, had made the success of the strange plane possible. The reporters were eager to know where Andy was going, what had been the results of the first test of the great autogyro, how many days he expected to be away and anything else that he cared to make public. Andy liked the reporters. They had always been very kind to him and, in no small measure, had been responsible for his tremendous popularity. But he could not give them any advance

information concerning the flight that was about to start. He and his companions posed willingly for the motion pictures. He even made a short speech into the "talkie" microphone. Then he turned to Mr. Avery, who had been waiting for a last-minute word with him.

"Off again, Mr. Avery," he smiled.

"Yes, Andy," said the older man. "I don't mind telling you that I'm more than a little worried. I have a hunch that this flight isn't going to be as simple as you believe. So be very careful, my boy, and don't play your luck too hard. Have a good vacation and don't take any chances that you can avoid. Send me a radio every now and then to tell me how you are getting along. Good-by!"

He shook Andy's hand vigorously and turned away. The young pilot waved to the crowds and entered the cabin, closing the door behind him. For an instant he stood very still in the big cabin, remembering other times when he had said good-by to the crowds and had set off on a record-breaking flight. What a thrill there was in starting away, not knowing what ad-

ventures might befall before their return to this same field! His eye suddenly fell upon an object which he had not noticed in the cabin upon his last inspection. Fastened in a conspicuous place against the wall was an ominous-looking holster. And from the open mouth of the holster projected the ugly black handle of a heavy service automatic. Andy looked at it very thoughtfully. It seemed to remind him that somewhere in the world was an enemy, a desperate man who would risk everything in an effort to do him harm. Then Andy shrugged his broad shoulders. Most people had many enemies, he reflected. So far as he knew, he had none, except for Herbert Brewster and his few companions. Surely the world was large enough to hold both Andy and Brewster!

He heard the engines as they kicked over under the impulse of their starters. He walked forward into the control room. Sam, very awkward-looking with his parachute pack dangling behind him, was watching the windmill as it slowly gathered speed under the drive of the center engine. Joe, behind the wheel, was just

sitting there, waiting patiently, calmly, for the vanes to gather sufficient speed for the take-off. Andy took the seat beside him. The rotor whirled faster and faster until at length it could only be seen as a glittering, spinning arc over the glass roof of the pilot room. Sam nodded his contentment at the behavior of the engines and walked to the door, ready for any emergency.

"Disconnect the engine drive to the blades," directed Andy. "The wind blast from the propellers will keep them spinning now."

Joe jerked at the lever. The windmill still whirled at a tremendous speed. Andy grasped the control wheel and pushed the throttles wide open. The engines thundered. The plane lurched ahead. The nose rose. The front wheels left the ground. The heavy ship was climbing almost straight into the air.

"What a ship!" exclaimed Andy. "I just can't get used to her climbing like this!"

As the people on the ground and the hangars and the mighty expanse of the Apex factory shrank in size, the landscape beneath the plane

expanded. A glint of blue in the east became a vast sheet of water, extending on and on until, in a blur of haze, it merged with the sky itself. On the west, Long Island Sound appeared. It seemed very large at first. Then it contracted as the plane rose until it appeared to be nothing more than a wide river separating Long Island from the Connecticut shore. Beyond the Sound, the orderly hills stretched back until they, too, were lost in the haze.

The altimeter indicated that the *Flying Windmill* had reached twelve thousand feet. Andy cut the engines down to cruising speed and headed the ship to the south. New York, looking like a toy city beneath the smoke which drifted across it from the factories on the Jersey Meadows, slipped slowly under the fuselage. Crisscrossed by ruler-straight streets and avenues, its lofty buildings foreshortened by altitude, it seemed impossible that six million people lived within its far-flung boundaries.

Then the *Flying Windmill* was over the marshes, cut into irregular slices by the net-

work of railways which left the banks of the Hudson River, leaped across meandering rivers, dived through tunnels and finally disappeared, heading north, west and south.

"Well, we're off," said Andy, turning the controls over to Joe.

Joe looked at him and smiled contentedly. He slouched deeply into the seat cushions and steered easily, his level gray eyes glacing from horizon to compass and back to the horizon again.

"Yes, old-timer," he said, "we're off and I'm glad of it. What do you want to do, follow the coast line south or steer a straight compass course?"

"We'll shoot straight for Washington and Richmond. You know the way that far. It'll be getting dark about then and we'll set a compass course for Jacksonville. From there south we'll follow the coast line. It'll be easy to follow the Dixie Highway from town to town."

"Good," nodded Joe, briefly. "This is the life!"

CHAPTER VI

A DISTURBING MESSAGE

As Andy walked back through the corridor leading to the living cabin, he hesitated at Sonny's radio room. He looked in. There was the boy, sitting at his instruments, as much at home as though the ship had been in the air for days instead of minutes. The fact that it was an entirely new type of plane, capable of accomplishing extraordinary feats of flying, meant not a thing to Sonny. They were flying and his beloved sets were operating to his entire satisfaction. That was all that mattered. He had complete faith in any Apex ship and when Andy was in command, Sonny just could not imagine anything happening to it that would make him leave his post. He looked up and saw Andy.

"The set is wonderful!" he declared happily.

"On the short waves, I've been able to exchange messages with an amateur in St. Louis and when I turn into the broadcasting range I can hear someone giving a lecture in Cleveland. When it gets dark we ought to at least double our range. By the way, how is the ship flying?"

"Like a Zeppelin."

"It's the steadiest plane we've ever flown in," declared Sonny. "I can tell that because my sending key doesn't seem to jump out from under my hand."

"That's on account of the windmill," explained Andy. "You see, each of the blades is hinged separately on the shaft and can adjust itself automatically to the bumps in the air."

"What time will we get to Miami?" asked the boy.

"We're just loafing along now, taking things very easy. We'll pass over Miami just before daybreak. We plan to leave the coast of Florida about the time it begins to grow light."

"Are we going to need more gas? If we

are, I'd better radio to one of the airports at Miami to have a crew ready."

"No. We have plenty of gas and oil to take us to Hook Island and halfway back to New York. We don't want to let people know where we are until we've found the treasure or have learned that it is all an April Fool joke. That's one of the reasons why I wanted to make our southward hop in the darkness. This ship is so funny-looking that about a million people would notice it and all the newspapers in the country would carry schedules of our trip. On our way home, it won't matter."

Scotty, who was sound asleep on Sonny's berth, opened one brown eye and lifted a single soft ear. For a few minutes he lay there, wondering if his master were going to do anything that might be interesting to a dog. At last he decided that he might have to sit up all night to keep the pilot company, so he went back to sleep.

Andy turned away from the radio room and strolled into the living cabin. It was bright and cheerful back there. The sun was setting

fast, but the room was brilliantly lighted and seemed very home-like. The insulation which lined the walls shut out most of the sound of the three powerful engines and Andy could hear the sound of happy whistling from the direction of the little kitchen.

"Hey, Andy," came Sam's jovial voice. "If you haven't anything better to do, you might help me peel some of these Irish steaks!"

"I might have known that you'd start to cook just as soon as the wheels left the ground," laughed Andy.

Sam, with a white apron tied around his generous stomach, was busily engaged in peeling potatoes and slicing them into neat little cubes for frying. He was a perfect picture of contentment as he worked there. A sizzling frying pan was fastened on the top of the electric stove. On the aluminum shelf of the kitchen cabinet was a fat, luscious steak.

"We're going to *eat* to-night, young man," said Sam, gravely. "I've been thinking for the past hour or two what would happen to us if one of those blades on the windmill should

break, or something. We'd come down like a rock. So when I got to worrying about that, I knew we'd have to eat a good meal to take our minds off our troubles."

"No one's mind is troubled except yours," retorted Andy. "Just think how much better off we are in a night flight in this autogyro than in an ordinary plane. If the engines should stop on the old Apex ships, we'd just have to nose down for a landing at a hundred miles an hour in the dark, with a twenty-to-one chance of a complete washout. In this crock, all we'd have to do would be to pull her nose back and we'd settle down for a landing that wouldn't break an egg."

"Yeah, and suppose we were to land smack on a church steeple?"

"You win!" laughed Andy. "So you can fix as big a meal as you wish. You would, anyway!"

Just as the *Flying Windmill* was flying over the millions of electric lights that stared up from the streets and buildings of Washington, Sam announced dinner.

Joe, who was still at the controls, volunteered to eat later. Andy, Sonny and Sam sat down at the table, while Scotty lay down on the floor beside his master, watching his friends expectantly and hoping that they might not forget that a big, healthy dog is hungry most of the time. The reading table had been covered with a white cloth. The chinaware and silver was all in its proper place and gleamed brightly in the light from the wall brackets. Sam had changed to a clean suit of coveralls and had wet his hair and plastered it back until his head was as smooth as a billiard ball.

"We certainly lead a rough life on these trips!" he chuckled. "I ask you if we could have a better meal, or have one more nicely served, if we were at the Ritz?"

"That's one of the things that makes our long flights a lot of fun instead of a tiresome chore," asserted Andy. "We know how to settle down and take life easily and comfortably while we can. If we do that when things are going smoothly, we're able to stand the hard knocks when things go wrong."

"I could burst right out crying when I see the expression on that dog's face!" declared Sam.

Before Sonny could move, Sam reached out his fork, speared Sonny's cut of meat and flipped it toward Scotty.

"Here, pooch," he called.

Scotty's brown eyes opened wide. He caught the flying bit of meat in mid-flight, closed his jaws with a snap and swallowed without an effort. Then he blinked and looked up at Sam, licking his chops.

When the fat mechanic turned back to the table, Sonny was contentedly eating the piece of meat which had once been Sam's, while Andy was carving some leathery, gristly meat to replace Sam's portion.

Neither Sonny nor Andy made the slightest comment. Sam opened his mouth to protest at the toughness of the piece that Andy was silently putting on his plate, then closed it again.

"Wonderful, tender steak," murmured Sonny, serenely.

"Best I ever tasted," agreed Andy, soberly.

Sam said nothing. The joke was on him. He sawed lustily at his piece, then chewed a long, long time, his round, moon-shaped face very woe-begone.

They attacked the fried potatoes heartily, ate a huge slice of apple pie apiece, then sat back, all very comfortable and happy.

It was pitch dark outside when Andy made his way forward to relieve Joe at the wheel. The soft glow from the instrument board was the only light in the control room. It was reflected on the calm, quiet face of the pilot, who sat at his ease, steering almost automatically. Stars filled the sky, seeming to be within reaching distance as they flickered in the black background of the night. Overhead were the four swiftly whirling blades of the rotating vanes, whose arc glittered redly as it mirrored the flames from the three exhaust pipes of the engines.

Andy slipped into the dual control seat and took over the controls. Joe yawned, stretched, then snapped on a tiny light over the chart

board which was fastened directly in front of the pilots' seats.

"Heading straight for Jacksonville, Andy," he said. "Those reflections in the sky to the east are from Richmond. On our compass course we pass the town about forty miles to the westward. We'll hit the coast line at Savannah. The plane's flying like a million dollars."

"Better hurry in for dinner before it gets cold and before Sam gets hungry again. Give him half a chance and he'll start eating all over again."

Joe laughed and left the room. Scotty came in, sniffed about for a few seconds, then scrambled into the seat that Joe had just vacated. He pawed and scratched at the cushions as though he were making a bed out of hay. Then he collapsed into the seat and went promptly to sleep. Andy reached over and stroked his soft fur. He was good company, just being there. Andy remembered other watches of the night when Scotty had silently stood duty with his master. Nights over the inhospitable At-

lantic Ocean when the leaping waves seemed to be reaching up hungrily for the frail flying boat which challenged them; nights over the oven-like desert of Arabia, where a forced landing would have meant instant death in a crash, or a slower, but no less certain death at the hands of the hostile tribesmen; nights over the desolate ice mountains of the South Pole, while blizzards threatened to plunge the *Apex* down to destruction; nights in the control room of a flaming rocket plane, headed at incredible speeds toward the jungles of the Amazon. What adventures they had had together! And if luck held, they'd have many, many more adventures before they made their last landing together.

It was good to sit there in the control room, steering the great plane through the quiet, starlit night. The lighted faces of the dials on the instrument board were the faces of friends who were helping him to guide his ship and to keep her safe in her steady course through the skies. They almost talked to him, telling him that the engines were functioning perfectly; that the

ship was upon an even keel; that the temperature within and without the hull was constant and comfortable: that she was headed in the proper direction. And when anything went wrong, these instruments would give him their messages of warning so that he might instantly take steps to correct the trouble or to bring the plane down to a landing in the darkness.

Little clusters of lights slipped beneath the hull. He checked them off on the chart. Tiny, sleepy villages nestled in the hills, unaware of the strange air monster which hurtled past overhead. Bright pin points of lights crawled along over highways as motor cars sped along between towns. But so swiftly did the *Flying Windmill* pass them that they seemed not to move at all.

The eastern sky began to glow redly, as though a whole city were afire beyond the horizon. Then the topmost edge of a full moon began to crawl into the sky, looking like a partly cooled ball of molten steel. Its rays illuminated the entire landscape below. Silver hills cast black shadows toward the west. Long,

winding rivers shimmered like streams of mercury. The earth, which had been invisible in the darkness, now looked like a strange, new world. Andy stared down at it, never tired of its ever-changing picture.

"We like this sort of thing pretty well, don't we, Scotty?" murmured the young pilot.

But the collie, who had been busily chasing a cat in his dreams, did not hear.

A beam of white light flashed against the outside of the control room windows. Andy, startled for the moment, stared at it. Then, as the circle of whiteness swiveled toward the bow engine, he knew it to be the faithful Sam, walking out on the catwalk which led along the side of the fuselage to the engine bed. He could see the fat mechanic now, stepping carefully on the narrow platform, his belt hooked onto a rod so that he could use both hands on the engine. For this trip he had invented a new method of greasing the rocker arms, having fashioned flexible leads which led down from each to a convenient spot at the side of the motor. Here Sam halted and produced a pressure grease

gun from his open-mouthed tool bag. By inserting its nozzle in the openings of the flexible leads, he was able to lubricate each of the rocker arms in its turn without having to climb all over the engine. This done, he flashed his searchlight on the motor, tested one part after another with screw driver and pliers and, at length, made his way back to the fuselage.

Then the searchlight focused on the port wing engine. Completely disregarding the thousands of feet of black void between himself and the ground below, Sam swarmed over the gangway, or catwalk, which led out to this engine and devoted a full fifteen minutes to tending it. The starboard engine came in for its share of his painstaking attention. Then, much to Andy's relief, he saw the dark figure make its way back toward the cabin door. The boy was always glad when Sam had finished his job on the motors. Of course, he knew that the heavy leather safety strap had been tested and tested again. But there was always the chance that it might fail and in this case, no power in the world could save Sam, for he would not

wear his parachute when on that job, saying that it got in his way.

"Oh, boy!" exclaimed Sam, entering the dark control room. "I'm sure glad we're going south instead of north! There's a breeze out there that would blow all the hair off a cat's back. But it was nice and warm and that's something to be thankful for. Every time I think of some of the cold weather I've babied the engines in, I begin to shiver till the fillings start to drop out of my teeth."

"Well, hold your jaws together then," Andy advised him. "You'd better turn in now. You'll be wanting to look at the engines again sometime after midnight, so get a shut-eye while you can."

At that moment, Sonny entered the room and handed Andy a penciled memorandum. Andy switched on the light over the chart board, read it and then sat silent for a moment, glancing at the note and then at the chart. Sam yawned loudly and turned toward the door. Andy stopped him.

"Better not turn in for a few minutes, Sam,"

he said gravely. "Sonny, ask Joe to come out here, will you?"

Sonny disappeared. He was back in a moment with Joe. The pilot glanced at the moonlit earth, then at the instrument board, after which he looked at Andy's thoughtful face.

"What's up, old-timer?" he asked, quietly.

"I want to read a weather report that Sonny just got over the radio. Listen to this: 'Advisory from Washington, D. C. A tropical disturbance of considerable intensity has been reported central a few miles south of Santiago, Cuba, moving slowly northward.' "

"Well, what about it?" asked Sam.

"That is the Weather Bureau's way of saying that one of the West Indian hurricanes is brewing," said Joe in his calm, even voice.

"That's why I called everybody together," replied Andy. "If it is a hurricane, it may sweep over the very spot that we're headed for. The Bahamas have been hit again and again by hurricanes, the last time as recently as eleven months ago. The point now is, do you fellows want to fly straight down into what

may be the path of one of those storms?"

"Sure," said Sam, promptly. "It may just be a rumor, after all. Someone told me that the people on the east coast of Florida spent half their time in the fall months dodging hurricanes that don't develop."

"And the ones they don't dodge come along and smack them right in the eye," added Joe.

"Here's my bright thought for the night," spoke up Sonny. "Last fall I was tuned in on one of the Florida broadcasting stations when they were expecting a hurricane. When it began to sweep north of Cuba and toward the Bahamas, they went on the air with reports every half hour. It seemed that the center of these storms moves very slowly, so anyone who wants to can get out of the way before it breaks. Now why not keep on with the hop in hopes the whole thing will peter out, as those scares usually do. If we listen to all the warnings, we can beat it in ten minutes' notice and be in New York before it hits the island we're going to."

"Atta boy, Sonny," yelped Sam. "We've

never turned back from a flight yet, so why start now?"

"It's mighty easy not to be afraid of something you don't know anything about," cautioned Joe.

"Well, what's your vote?" Andy asked him.

"I vote to go on," replied Joe, unhesitatingly. "But I think Sonny better keep the phones glued pretty close to his ears."

"That's three votes to go on with the flight," said Andy, slowly. "So I'll make the motion unanimous."

"Good!" approved Sam. "I'll keep the old engines perking as long as this spinning top thing of ours will hold us up."

And so the *Flying Windmill* headed southward through the night, heading directly toward a far-distant storm which had already sunk a score of fishing boats, a schooner and a little coasting steamer which was not equipped with wireless.

CHAPTER VII

SOUTHWARD BOUND

THE *Flying Windmill* had roared over countless miles of swamp land, where glittering water reflected the moonlight through tangles of cypress and oak. It would have been a ghastly place for a forced landing and Andy breathed a sigh of relief when he saw, far ahead in the distance, a reflection in the sky which he knew must be Savannah, Georgia. He pressed a button, causing a bell to ring in Joe's cabin. A few minutes later, the co-pilot entered, ready to take his shift at the controls.

"Flying beautifully, Joe," Andy told him. "I've cut out the bow engine. We're cruising with the port and starboard engines throttled down to two-thirds speed. We have a tail wind behind us. The air-speed meter shows seventy-five miles an hour. The wind must be boosting

us on another twenty-five, because as near as I can figure it from checking the towns on the chart, we're logging a steady one hundred miles an hour. Here's Savannah, just ahead of us. I'll turn in now."

Joe stared down at the swamps.

"Pretty bad country," he observed. "And it extends all the way to Jacksonville, too. Might as well shoot straight for the Florida line. It will take us just over the ocean but I'd as soon put this boat down in the surf as in this jungle. At least we could swim for shore without having to push alligators and snakes out of our way."

"Fair enough," agreed Andy. "Call me in four hours. We should be well down the Florida east coast by that time."

Scotty scrambled to his feet, fell off the seat and followed Andy out of the room. Sonny's radio cabin was a blaze of light. Andy stopped at the door. There was Sonny, sitting at his desk, ear phones on his head, while beside him was a huge chocolate cake—or what was left of it. Sprawled comfortably on Sonny's berth

was Sam's huge bulk, his face almost hidden by a mammoth slice of the cake into which he was gnawing.

"For the love of Mike!" exclaimed Andy. "Don't you birds ever sleep?"

"Come in and have a bite," invited Sam, waving the slice of cake toward a vacant chair. "It seems so good to be flying again and Sonny and I want to sit up to enjoy it. Besides, what's the sense to sleeping when you can be eating?"

Andy sat down and cut himself a piece of cake.

"Getting any weather reports, Sonny?" he asked, between mouthfuls.

"A little while ago I picked up a flash from an American destroyer in the harbor at Guantanamo, Cuba. The barometer has fallen to 29.55 and the wind is gathering force. A United Fruit steamer at Kingston, Jamaica, reports that the barometer there has been as low as 29.50, but is gradually rising. There's been a heavy rain there. They think there's no danger to Jamaica because the storm seems to be moving away from them."

"So it's over Cuba, eh?" murmured Andy, thoughtfully. "Then if it keeps going northward, it will hit somewhere in the Bahamas. The uncertain part of it is that it may blow itself out as it passes across Cuba, or it may gather more and more force and begin to whoop it up in good shape when it starts across the water again."

"Don't forget we once rode out an Indian typhoon," Sam reminded him.

"I'll never forget it," said Andy, positively.

"We'll be in touch with the Miami broadcasting stations as soon as they go on the air in the morning," Sonny pointed out. "They'll be sending out the latest bulletins and Washington will keep them advised on the path of the storm. We'll know its direction long before it hits the Bahamas."

"Maybe," conceded Andy, doubtfully. "Remember the storm of September, 1929? It played around the Bahamas for a week, broke all records for twisting around like a snake and didn't hit in a dozen places it was expected to. Finally it turned back on its own course,

roared across the Florida keys and turned north in the Gulf Stream." He rose and went to the door. "For my part, I've had enough of flying and arguing for the day. I'm going to press the straw. And I'd advise you two nighthawks to do the same."

"Presently, Andy, presently," grunted Sam, cutting himself another slice of cake. "There's still some important eating to do."

Andy's cabin, with its softly shaded wall lights, its attractive furniture and its soft, comfortable berth, caused the young pilot's eyes to glow with pleasure as he entered it. These little staterooms, on one Apex ship after another, had come to seem almost as much like home to the boy as his own great room at Hillside. To be sure, the other looked out upon beautiful gardens and the bright green turf of his own landing field in back of the house instead of on to endless vistas of pounding seas and low-lying swamps. There was space at home for rows and rows of bookcases instead of a tiny wall shelf which would accommodate only half a dozen volumes. And there was a

trophy case in his room at Hillside where were kept the hundreds of medals, cups and gifts which had been presented to him by the rulers of countries and the officials of cities over which he had flown during his great flights to strange parts of the world. The furnishings of his own room, too, were far more complete, for since he had become wealthy as a result of prizes and awards and royalties from his patent carburetor, he could buy almost anything he desired. At the same time, there was something about these tiny, vibrating staterooms that filled a huge niche in the boy's heart, for it was in these cabins that he had spent some of the happiest hours of his life.

He slipped off his coat and shoes and lay down beside Scotty, who had already jumped upon the berth. For a few minutes he twisted and turned. It was always a bit difficult to get to sleep on the first night of a trip. He heard the familiar pounding of the engines as their muffled roaring seeped through the insulation of the walls. He was conscious of the slight rocking of the ship, as she plunged through

bumps in the air. He sniffed the well-known smells of a plane, the slight acrid tang of burned gas and engine oil, the sickly-sweet odor of wing dope and fresh paint. But to the sleepy boy, they all combined into a fragrance more delightful than the finest perfume ever blended in Paris. They were a vital part of his life—and he loved them. His eyes closed. The noise and the vibration and the smells faded farther and farther into the background. He threw one weary arm over the limp body of the collie and fell into a deep dreamless slumber.

He awakened instantly as a hand touched his shoulder. The first gray tints of dawn were thinning the blackness of his cabin. He swung his legs quickly over the side of his berth and groped around for his shoes.

"We're getting close to Miami, Andy." It was Sonny's voice. The calm tone of it told Andy that there was no emergency. He subdued a sleepy yawn.

"All right, ivory head. Tell Joe I'll relieve him in a minute."

Sonny began to move away.

"Hey, young one, have you been to bed yet?"

The boy hesitated.

"Not yet, Andy," he said, in an apologetic tone. "I'll be giving the ear phones to Sam in a little while and then I'll catch up on my sleep."

"I'll say you will!" declared Andy. "Any news?"

"Not a thing, except that the storm has struck Santiago, Cuba."

"How severe is it?"

"Not very bad. Wind is blowing seventy-five or eighty miles an hour, with lots of rain."

"Hmmm," mused Andy. "Well, we've flown through worse than that."

When the young captain emerged into the comparative brightness of the control room, the whole eastern sky was tinted a gorgeous coral pink. Overhead, tiny cumulus clouds were painted with tints of scarlet and gold. The colors grew darker as they approached the western horizon, where they dimmed into a dull, leaden gray.

Below the speeding plane was the coast line

of Florida. Joe was steering directly over the sandy beach, which extended from north to south as far as the eye could reach. The sea was pounding in on the beach in endless rollers, their white crests contrasting vividly with the sapphire blue of the ocean itself. Just beneath the right wing, a long, meandering river crawled southward like a fat, lazy snake. It joined the sea just ahead. Narrow spits of land, separated from the mainland by island-dotted bays, followed the coast line southward. And on these silver-shaped islands were clustered beautiful houses amid formal gardens and clumps of palm trees.

Beyond the right wing of the plane stretched the Everglades, flat, dreary and ominous-looking. Had it not been dotted with thousands of lakes and ponds, it would have reminded Andy of the wheat fields of Indiana and Illinois. Straight lines of canals extended across the dun-colored swamps to the very horizon itself, crisscrossed, in the distance, by other canals which ran diagonally and at right angles to the main drainage ditches.

"We've just passed Palm Beach," said Joe,

whose keen gray eyes showed no traces of long hours of vigil. "That's Fort Lauderdale ahead of us and there, in the distance, is Miami."

"How's the bus flying?" asked Andy.

"Perfectly."

"Then we'd better change our course at Miami," decided the captain. "The mainland starts to curve pretty sharply to the southwest below Miami and Hook Island is almost directly southeast. So we may as well start our water jump right there."

"The barometer must be dropping," observed Joe. "The altimeter is slowly getting cockeyed."

"That's because of that low pressure area to the south of us. When we're over Miami, you'd better ask Sonny to radio for a correct barometer reading from the local weather bureau. Then we'll set our altimeter. All right, Joe, I'll take the controls now."

They passed over Fort Lauderdale and Hollywood as Andy sat down behind the steering wheel. It was no longer necessary to watch the compass. He had but to follow the line of

the beach southward toward the skyscrapers of Miami, which were growing more and more distinct with each passing minute. Their white concrete sides were tinted pink by the rising sun and, against the dull background of the flatlands to west and south of them, they looked marvelously beautiful.

It was very warm within the control room. Andy raised one of the windows and enjoyed the mild morning air which wiped the last vestiges of sleep from his eyes and brain. Now he could see the causeways which connected the city of Miami with the island of Miami Beach. Biscayne Bay was a glittering expanse of placid water, a great mirror which reflected the gorgeous colors of the sky. Scores of white yachts and motor boats snuggled against the piers at the edge of the palm-strewn Bayfront Park. The wide cement streets of the town were almost deserted. The people were not yet awake. When he was directly over the Bay, he banked his ship slightly, kicked left rudder and changed the course, heading diagonally away from the curving shore line. They

sped over the narrow stretch of land that was Miami Beach and out over the blue-green waters of the Gulf Stream. Land grew dim and hazy behind the speeding plane. The Everglades were already lost in the haze astern. The horizon ahead was as sharp and as hard as the edge of a knife. There was nothing between the bow of the *Flying Windmill* and the southern coast of Africa but a little cluster of islands and thousands of miles of ocean.

CHAPTER VIII

HOOK ISLAND

BREAKFAST was a jolly affair. Sam, who had snatched nearly two hours of sleep between his inspections of the engines, was in fine form and insisted upon serving the meal in the control room where they might all eat together while watching the colors playing across the tropic sea.

Flying at a thousand feet, they were soon out of sight of land, which fact added to the enjoyment of the occasion, reminding them all of previous flights where they had been out of sight of land for days at a stretch.

"Do you know, Andy," said Sam, pouring himself a second cup of coffee, "you've never shown us the map that that giddy idiot Briggs presented to you. How do we all know that you even have a map?"

"I'll show it to you," smiled Andy reaching for his pocket.

"Look!" called Sonny, suddenly, who had been standing by the starboard window watching the vivid colors of sea and sky. "There's another plane!"

They all stared in the direction of his pointing hand. Yes, there it was, three or four miles to the south of them, a large, single-motored cabin monoplane, equipped with twin pontoons. It was apparently flying on a course almost parallel to Andy's, for it drew no nearer. Andy reached for the glasses and studied it carefully, then examined the chart at great length.

"Maybe it's one of the Miami-Nassau planes," ventured Sam.

"No," said Andy. "They use flying boats and amphibians for that run. Besides, it is heading much too far to the southward to hit either Nassau or Bimini. I can't imagine where they *are* going. Unless they are headed for the same tiny group of islands that we are bound for, they must be shooting all the way for Santiago, Cuba, or Port-au-Prince, Haiti."

"And they couldn't go that far," added Joe, "or they'd run smack into the hurricane."

The monoplane was considerably faster than the *Flying Windmill.* As they watched her, she drew ahead and grew smaller and smaller until she was but a speck on the southeastern horizon.

"Andy," burst out Sonny, "you don't suppose that plane has anything to do with the birds who stole the map from Mr. Briggs, do you?"

"I don't know, Sonny," replied Andy, his face very serious. "One guess is as good as another. But unless they are going to curve slightly south to hit the coast of Cuba, Haiti or Santo Domingo, there isn't anything but those islands this side of South Africa."

"Well, there's no sense in worrying about it," shrugged Sam. "We'll find out when we get wherever it is we're going. And all I have to say is that with the arsenal we have aboard this ship, those babies better not speak above a low, polite whisper when they are addressing Samuel Allen. No, sir!"

"Now that you are looking for pirate gold,

you're feeling as bloodthirsty as old Blackbeard himself!" laughed Andy.

"Listen, Andy," Sam said, "if Blackbeard himself should step on my toe to-day, I'd tweak his whiskers and fetch him such a wipe on the jaw that he'd be more polite to me than any Pullman porter you ever saw! Yes, sir, I feel so good to be flying again that if I saw a lion roaring at me, I'd bite him to death."

"And if you saw a man with a popgun," added Joe, soberly, "you'd jump into the water and start swimming back to New York."

"If you had twice as many brains as you have, Joe Lamson," growled Sam, "you'd be half-witted!"

"It seems to me," interposed Andy, "that somebody asked to see a map."

"Right," said Joe.

"Here it is," replied Andy, passing a sheet of paper to Joe. Sam bent over the co-pilot's shoulder to gaze at it.

The sketch represented a tiny island, which was shaped almost exactly like a fishhook. The pointed or barbed end of the island extended

toward the north. In a gradual sweep, growing wider and wider, the island swung to the south, then around to the northeast. Just off the southeastern end of the odd-shaped shank was a tiny dot. A line extended from the northerly point straight across the shank of the island and ended at that dot, which was apparently a point in the water. It crossed the shank of the island at an angle. Where the line met the southern shore there was a cross. Then the letters appeared, just above the cross, "N. 40. SW. 120." That was all.

Sam groaned as though he were in misery.

"Do you mean to say," he demanded, "that you brought us down here to chase that dizzy line all over the lot? What is N. 40? What is SW. 120? What is that dot out there in the water? I think you are a little potty in the head!"

"We might turn around and drop him off at Miami," suggested Joe in a loud stage whisper.

"No, don't do that!" protested Sam quickly. "I want to see how funny you dim-wits look when you're hunting for a pirate, or a ten-dol-

lar gold piece, or the end of the rainbow, or whatever it is you're going to hunt for."

"Listen, Sam," said Andy. "That map isn't as complicated as it looks. I used to love to read books about pirates and have read a good many true stories about pirate gold being found. Unless I'm all wrong, N. 40 is some scale of measurement toward the north of a certain spot. It may be in feet, or meters or fathoms, or some other scale. It is likely that it means 40 paces. And the SW. 120 means a certain distance to the southwest, I think."

"Andy, I could kiss you!" declared Sam. "I can fairly feel those dollars or francs or ducats rolling around in my pocket!"

"Better wait till we dig them up and get home with them," Andy warned him.

"Oh, we'll get them, all right," said Sam, airily. "I'll go and clean up the dishes and stack them away in the lockers so we'll have room to put all the gold aboard."

"Take Sonny with you," Andy told him. "He hasn't had any sleep since early yesterday morning. His eyelids weigh a ton."

"Come on, Squid," shouted Sam, sternly. Sonny made as if to protest, but Sam seized him by the collar and dragged him to his room. He threw him on the bed, held his squirming body down with a hand that was as large as an elephant's ear and jerked his shoes off. Then he straightened up, looking very fierce. "One move out of you, Sonny Static, and I'll tie you into that bunk!"

Sonny grinned sleepily and closed his eyes. Sam looked down at him, his face softening as he watched the boy's deep, regular breathing. Then he turned away and began to rattle pots and pans in the kitchen.

It was about an hour later that Andy sighted the low, marshy shore of Andros Island, the largest of all the Bahama group, far over to the east. The entire coast of the island seemed to be one huge mangrove swamp. As they flew straight on their course they watched the distant land slip past. It did not look attractive.

"I'm glad we don't have to hunt for our gold on that island," said Andy. "I don't care much for swamps and there doesn't seem to be anything else there."

Joe, who had remained in his comfortable chair after breakfast was over, shook his head.

"I don't like them either. Too many snakes and alligators. Most of these Bahama Islands are like that—either sandy little spits of land just sticking their heads out of the sea or great big swamps like that one."

A full half hour went by before they had passed the long, low island. They flew over flotillas of sponge boats, whose crews looked up at them as they passed, too amazed to wave. A little trading schooner, sailing placidly along in a moderate breeze, was sighted a short distance to the eastward. Beyond, the sea seemed deserted. They roared over dozens of tiny pin points of cays, or islands, without seeing a single house. Some of them were almost hidden beneath dense forests of scrub mangroves. Others had magnificent stands of American pine, mixed with tropical mahogany. Still others were bare of all vegetation except rank growths of saw grass.

Andy was now studying his charts carefully. He pinned the rough map of Hook Island to the top of the chart board.

"Our place must be somewhere in the next group of cays, Joe," he said. "You watch now, and if you see an island the shape of a fishhook, sing out."

They flew for many minutes over a desolate stretch of sea, then over another group of small islands. Suddenly Joe stiffened in his seat.

"Over there, Andy," he called. "Hard left rudder; it's over to the east."

Andy banked the plane in the direction Joe had indicated. There came a sudden gasp of astonishment from the usually calm pilot.

"Andy," he said, a sharp edge of excitement in his voice, "that's the island, all right, but the monoplane has beaten us to it!"

CHAPTER IX

CAPTURED

For a few age-long minutes Andy was tempted to turn the *Flying Windmill* around on her course and to return to New York. His right hand hesitating upon the throttle, he stared at Hook Island, making no move to coast down to a landing.

The rough, penciled map on his chart board was fairly accurate in its general outline of the island. Nearly four miles long and not more than half a mile across at its widest point, Hook Island was a sandy, desolate place. The eastern end, which corresponded to the shank of a fishhook, was covered by an extensive growth of coconut palms. The central part, where the island began to curve toward the barbed end of the hook, was low and flat, and covered with a dense thicket of mangroves. At

no spot did the island appear to be raised more than twenty feet above water level.

The strange seaplane had made a landing in the little bay formed by the curve of the northward beach. Andy could see three men on the sand in front of the pontoons. They seemed to be unloading supplies from the plane and setting up a tent. Now, however, they were standing motionless, gazing up at the *Flying Windmill.*

Sam and Sonny entered the control room, the boy rubbing the sleep from his tired eyes. The sudden change of course had wakened him.

"We seem to be a little late," observed Sam, pointing down at the seaplane. "Looks as though we might not have the privacy we need to carry on a first-class, up-to-the-minute treasure hunt."

"I'll bet those men are the same ones who stole the plans from Mr. Briggs," muttered Andy, his eyes growing hard and grim. "We'll go down, anyway, and see what happens."

"Being a cautious sort of bird, and always careful of my own hide," asserted Sam, "I

think I'll begin to carry a gun from this minute on."

"Me, too," grunted Joe. "Bring mine along when you come back."

Andy had made an entire circuit of the island at an altitude of fifteen hundred feet. Now he cut the throttle. The *Flying Windmill* began to settle in an amazingly slow and almost vertical descent.

"We'll choose the other end of the island," he told Joe. "I'm going to put her down close to those palms on the eastern end. That'll keep the length of the island between ourselves and those birds. What's more, I think the treasure will be closer to us than it is to them."

"Look," Joe pointed out, "they're starting to run toward this end!"

"We'll be on the ground and ready for them when they come."

Down, down, the *Flying Windmill* sank, her rotor blades whirling around at a tremendous rate as the rising air pressed against their curved surfaces. Andy watched the ground carefully, jazzing the throttle from time to time

to maneuver the ship toward the most likely-looking spot within sight. The palm trees grew larger and larger until at last the plane settled beneath the level of their topmost fronds. Then the tail skid hit the sandy surface, the widespread front wheels came down with a heavy bump and the *Flying Windmill* had completed her long trip.

Andy rose, wearily, and opened all the windows of the control room so that the soft tropic breezes might blow through the cabins. He staggered a bit as he walked down the corridor toward his own room, for his legs were accustomed to the uneasy motion of the ship through the air. It would take them all some time to become used to the steadiness of the floor under their feet.

Sam, whose first thought was always for his beloved engines, was already crawling out on the catwalk. This time he needed no safety belt to prevent himself from pitching off into space. In its place was an ominous-looking cartridge belt, from which dangled a leg holster, made fast to his thigh with a leather thong.

Joe, too, came out of his cabin with a holster and belt.

"What are you going to do," asked Andy, "have your picture taken for a Wild West show?"

"Listen, old-timer," answered Joe, very seriously, "you'd better go and get your own gun. We're after buried treasure now, and it's a game in which there are no rules. In a lonely place like this, lots of things might happen that the police would never know about."

Scotty had leaped to the ground as soon as Sam had opened the cabin door. Now he was running around and around in circles, barking in vast excitement, pausing now and then to roll in the soft, warm sand. As much as he loved flying, it was good to get on solid ground again where a large and very happy dog might have room to exercise.

Andy stepped to Sonny's radio cabin. He looked in at the door just in time to see the youngster buckle on an automatic that seemed to be larger than the boy himself.

"Atta boy, Sonny," Andy laughed. "But you'll grow all lopsided if you walk around very long with that cannon on!"

Sonny flushed in embarrassment.

"I just thought I'd be prepared in case there was any trouble," he said apologetically.

"That's right, old-timer," nodded Andy. "Now you might see what sort of range you can get out of your static box while we're on the ground."

"I won't be able to transmit very far without the aërial," Sonny warned him. "If you plan to stay here long, we'd better run a wire from the ship to one of the palm trees."

"It all depends on the location of the treasure, if there *is* any treasure, the dispositions of the strangers from that seaplane and the weather," declared Andy. "We won't need to send for a while yet, anyway, so don't bother with an aërial. You might see what you can get in the way of a weather report, though."

Sonny sat down before his instrument. Andy called Sam and Joe and asked them to help him unload the tools for digging and measur-

ing. They pitched to with a will and in half an hour there was a pile of picks, shovels, tape lines, and other odds and ends of equipment on the ground beside the cabin door.

Suddenly there came a deep-throated growl from Scotty. The flyers looked at him. He was standing perfectly rigid, like a pointer, his sharp nose directed at the thicket of mangroves, half a mile away.

"Guess our friends are coming," observed Andy, watching the edge of the woods.

In a few moments, the thick hedge of mangroves parted and four men appeared. Silently they walked toward the plane, while Andy, Sam and Joe calmly watched their advance. Scotty crouched at Andy's feet, trembling and growling softly.

"Look at that first man!" hissed Sam.

There was something familiar about the man's figure and about his walk. Andy stared at him and was conscious of a sudden sinking of the heart.

"It's Herbert Brewster!" he gasped.

Joe dropped a hand to his holster and loos-

ened his gun. Sam drew closer to Andy, his laughing eyes very grim and bleak. Brewster suddenly came to a halt, gazing at the trio who stood beside the autogyro. He turned and spoke to his companions, then advanced toward the close-knit little group.

"Well, well, well," he said, a false note of friendliness in his voice, "if it isn't our old friend, Andy Lane and his fellow flyers! What an honor it is to meet you!"

"Sorry we can't cheer at seeing your ugly pan, Brewster," retorted Sam, angrily. "How did you manage to break out of that London jail?"

Brewster's face was contorted for a moment, then it twisted into a mask of politeness.

"You are being very rude, Allen," he said, "but not being a gentleman, I don't suppose you know it."

"Still the jolly little wisecracker, aren't you Herbie?" snapped Sam, his face very red. "If you'll send your gorillas away and meet me over at the beach, I'll tie a couple of bowknots in your nose and hang an egg on each eye."

"Pipe down, Sam," ordered Andy.

Sam subsided, muttering. Andy turned to Brewster, who still maintained his pretense of good nature.

"I can't say that we're glad to see you, Brewster," he said. "You're a crook and the island is pretty small for us both to be on it. You have played us so many dirty tricks in the past that I wouldn't trust you any farther than I could throw you."

"Listen, Andy," spluttered Sam, "if that baby stays on the island, I won't dare to go to sleep. My mouth might fall open and I'd be afraid he'd sneak up and steal the gold fillings out of my teeth."

"That's enough, Allen," snapped Brewster. "Like most fat, empty-headed men, you talk too much. I didn't come here to argue with you. I came to warn you all that you are trespassing."

"Trespassing upon whose property?" asked Andy, mildly. "Doesn't this land belong to the British Crown?"

"You're trespassing upon our rights. We got here first."

"Why?" demanded Andy, sweetly. "Because you were able to steal the map from Briggs? Too bad, for your sake, that you didn't kill him. After your gunmen had left, he drew us a map, too."

A gun suddenly appeared in Brewster's hand.

"Take your hand away from your side, Lamson, and you too, Allen," he shouted. "I'd plug you in a minute and enjoy doing it! All of you, put your hands in the air."

He had the drop on them and they knew it. Slowly, reluctantly, the three flyers raised their hands. Guns appeared in the hands of Brewster's companions.

"I've got you now, Andy Lane!" snarled Brewster. "It's a long path that doesn't turn somewhere. You've been in my way ever since you started to fly. You've caused me a lot of time, trouble and expense. Well, you're through now." His voice became mocking. "Little Andy Lane, the boy hero! The most popular flyer in the world, the boy that kings and presidents and mayors pin basketfuls of medals on! Well, I'm going to clip your

wings!" He turned to one of his companions. "Red, you go over to that plane, light a match and set fire to it right under the center engine. What a pretty new plane, Andy! It looks a little silly in the air, though, and I'm sure I won't miss it."

Joe Lamson began to lower his right hand. Brewster's gun swiveled around until it pointed straight at the pilot's chest.

"Up, Lamson, up with that hand if you want to live a little longer!"

Joe raised his hand. He could read in Brewster's eyes that the automatic would spit flame if he hesitated the briefest part of a second.

CHAPTER X

THE TABLES ARE TURNED

The man Red was walking toward the plane, reaching in his pocket for a box of matches. Andy tensed his muscles for a charge. What did it matter if he were hit? Sonny was inside his radio room. If the plane burst into flames, the blazing gasoline tanks would bar the boy's way to the cabin door. He saw Brewster looking at him, but he did not care. He opened his mouth to shout a warning that Sonny must hear in spite of the ear phones that would be on his head. But the words had not passed his lips when a sudden spurt of crimson flame darted from the cabin door. The man Red, who was just on the point of scratching a match, screamed, dropped matches and gun, and clapped his hand to his shoulder. Another shot cracked from the plane. A little

fountain of sand leaped up at Brewster's feet.

Joe's automatic barked. The gun leaped from Brewster's hand and dropped into the sand. The two men behind the bandit leader turned and began to run back toward the mangroves. Brewster, his face black with fury, scooped up his automatic, aimed it at Andy and began to squeeze the trigger. But at that instant, there was a flash of tan-and-white fur. Silently, Scotty leaped. His force was that of a battering ram. Brewster saw him coming and instinctively threw up his arm to protect his throat. He pitched over backward under the impetus of fifty pounds of canine bone and muscle.

"Scotty!" cried Andy. "Scotty, come here!"

The dog, who was on top of the struggling man, looked around at his master. Brewster rolled out from under him. Scotty snarled and crouched.

"Scotty! Come here!"

Scotty's head dropped, but he turned away from Brewster, who was already springing to

his feet and turning to race after his companions. Half buried in the sand where he had fallen was the blued-steel barrel of his automatic.

Sam dropped to the ground. Flat on his stomach, he rested his elbow in the sand and took careful aim. Joe's gun, too, was pointed at the escaping man.

"Don't shoot, Joe," begged Sam. "I've got him where I want him."

"Sam!" Andy shouted. "Don't, Sam!"

The mechanic turned a grim face toward the boy, who was holding Scotty's collar.

"Why not?" Sam demanded.

"Don't shoot, I tell you!" repeated Andy.

Sam looked utterly disgusted.

"All right, then. Come on, Joe, let's make them hurry."

With that he emptied his automatic at the ground just behind Brewster's feet. Spatters of sand were showered against the bandit's legs. Joe fired steadily, a slight grin on his lips. The fleeing men covered the ground in great leaps. Even the red-headed man, whom

Sonny had shot in the shoulder, made amazing speed in his efforts to escape the singing bullets which snapped at his footsteps. At last Brewster and his men were out of range. But they did not turn back. They reached the shelter of the mangroves and disappeared. Sam and Joe slipped fresh clips into their still-smoking guns.

"What's the matter with you, Andy?" demanded Sam. "Don't you know that our life isn't worth a hoot while we and those birds are on the same island?"

But Andy did not hear. He was running back to the plane. Sonny was leaning against the sill of the cabin door, his face deathly pale.

Andy leaped aboard and threw his arm around the boy's slender shoulders.

"Sonny, you old fighting cock," he shouted exultantly, "you've saved our lives!"

"Did not," said Sonny, weakly. "I just saved the plane. Scotty saved your lives."

"Listen, how long do you think we'd have lasted without the plane?" demanded Andy. "They'd have driven us to one end of the is-

land while they hunted for the treasure and then they'd have flown away and left us to die of thirst or starvation."

He bent over to stroke the collie, who was still grumbling in his throat.

"You'll get the biggest bone we have on the ship, you fighting hound," he said. "If it hadn't been for Sonny with his gun and you with your teeth, we'd sure have been out of luck!"

"All I want in this world," came Sam's voice through the open doorway, "is to get these ten fingers around Brewster's throat and listen to him say 'squawk-squawk.'"

He and Joe entered and made a rush for Sonny. They slapped him on the back. Sam grabbed him around the waist and waltzed him about the cabin.

"Listen, Sonny," he panted, at last, "if anyone begins to kid you about carrying a cannon after this, sic me on to him, will you? Man, oh, man, I was never so relieved in my life as I was when you plugged that bird with the match box."

"I was just coming out of the radio room," smiled Sonny, "and I happened to look around the corner of the door and there you were with those four men covering you. I didn't know what to do. I was afraid that if I shot, they'd get to shooting at you. But when that fellow began to strike a match to set fire to the plane, the gun seemed to go off in my hand all by itself. No one was more surprised than I was when he yelled and started to run away!"

"Well," said Andy, soberly, "now that the excitement is over for the minute, we've got to decide what to do next."

"We've got to hunt for that treasure," replied Sam, promptly.

"What about the weather?" asked Andy.

"Oh, bother the weather!" exclaimed Sam. "Do you think we want to run away like spanked puppies and leave all that gold to Brewster?"

"We can put a guard between Brewster's end of the island and ourselves," proposed Joe, "and then see what we can find."

"We'll have to set a guard all the time we're

here," said Andy. "They're likely to rush the ship and try to capture it."

"If Brewster isn't afraid of the weather, I'm not," declared Sam.

"Let's take a look around and see what we can make out of that map business," suggested Joe.

"All right," agreed Andy. "Sonny, you take Scotty and go halfway across the sand toward the edge of those mangroves. You'll be just out of range there. If they come anywhere near the edge of the clearing, Scotty will smell them or hear them and will give you warning. Then you fire a couple of shots toward the trees. That'll scare them and will give us the signal."

Sonny nodded. Andy went into the control room and took the map from the chart board.

"Let's get out, now, and see how this layout compares with things on the island. There's that mysterious dot somewhere off the eastern end that we must account for."

Making sure that their guns were loaded and ready, they all jumped to the ground.

Sonny walked toward the mangroves and when he had covered about half the distance from the plane to the trees, he sat down, his face toward the scrub and his eyes very watchful. At that spot, the island was not more than half a mile wide, so no one could pass him without being observed. Scotty lay down beside him. The dog seemed to know that he was detailed to guard duty. His large brown eyes did not leave the grove of trees. His wet, cold nose twitched constantly as he sniffed the wind.

Andy, Sam and Joe walked through the loose sand toward the palm trees at the eastern end of the island. On their left, long rollers boomed in from the Atlantic Ocean. On their right, the southern shore of the little island dropped off in a sandy bluff which seemed to be the highest point on the entire cay. They walked to the edge and looked down. The water, calm and mirrorlike in the shelter of the island, was a full twenty feet below. The palm trees extended to the very brink of the bluff. Those nearest the water leaned crazily toward it as though permanently bent by the prevailing winds from the other side.

"That line on this map," puzzled Andy, "extends from the hook-like point where Brewster's plane is beached, straight across the island and seems to cross the water's edge at just about this point."

"And it goes out to sea in about that direction," added Sam, pointing beyond the southeasterly end of the island. "Now where does it stop?"

"It stops at the point marked with a dot on the penciled sketch," said Joe, staring out across the water. "Now what could that dot be?"

"Look, Joe!" exclaimed Andy, suddenly. "There, across the water! There's a rock sticking up above the surface. I'll bet that's the dot!"

The others stared at a jagged black rock that stood like a lonely sentinel on guard beyond the southeastern end of the cay. Then they glanced again at the penciled map, comparing the position of the rock with the dot on the sketch.

"That's it, sure as shooting," nodded Joe. "And now I can tell you what that line means.

It's a sight gained by standing on that rock and looking straight across at the hooked point at the other end of the island. Somewhere along the straight line between the rock and the point is the place where you start following the N. 40, SW. 120 business."

"Zoowie!" whooped Sam. "I'm going to buy a Hispano-Suiza roadster and a big white steam yacht and——"

"Pipe down, Sam," laughed Andy. "Before we get through with Brewster and the hurricane, you may be lucky to buy a bicycle and a rowboat with an outboard motor!"

The three walked along the sandy bluff to see if they could estimate the exact point at which the line would cross the island.

"That's funny," muttered Joe, coming to a halt. "If you stood on that rock, you couldn't see over the top of this sand bluff and it's a cinch whoever drew that map couldn't see the hooked end of the cay. We can just see it from here, twenty or twenty-five feet above water level."

"I know the answer," declared Andy, sud-

denly. "It must have been a hundred and fifty or two hundred years since that pirate, Blackbeard, buried his treasure and surveyed the place. Since then this bluff has been gradually built up by the wind-blown sand."

"Or else they anchored their vessel near the rock and had a man up in the rigging to sight along the line."

"No. Those old-time pirates didn't let in a whole ship's crew on the location of their treasure caches. The tough old bird probably came here in a rowboat, planted his loot and killed the boatmen who helped him. Then there'd be nobody but himself to know where it was buried. This whole chain of islands has been laid flat by scores and scores of hurricanes. The big storms and the constant trade winds have probably shifted the sand and built up this bluff."

"I should worry," said Sam, "as long as the shape of the whole island hasn't changed."

"I doubt if it has," Andy said. "It is the same shape now as it is shown on the old map. Now let's see how we can locate that line with-

out being able to sight from one end straight across to the other."

He thought silently for a few moments. Then his face cleared.

"I know!" he declared jubilantly. "Just the way a sea captain takes a cross-bearing in a harbor. We'll take the compass, come up here and take sights on the rock and on the point until we are in a position where they are at an angle of exactly one hundred and eighty degrees from each other. That'll put us right on the line."

"That's right," nodded Joe, who was an expert navigator.

"It sounds like a lot of hooey to me," decided Sam, "but I'm so anxious to start digging somewhere that I don't much mind where I start."

"Let's get back to the plane," suggested Joe. "We can get the compass and relieve Sonny so that he can try to get some weather dope for us."

"What's the matter with the weather now?" demanded Sam. "Except for those few wisps

of clouds over there, I've never seen such a clear day in my life! Look, did you ever see a sharper horizon?"

"No," admitted Joe. "And that's one of the things that worries me. They say that these hurricanes are always preceded by weather that looks too perfect to be true. And those clouds over there are cirrus formation. They go with a hurricane, too."

"Yes," agreed Andy. "We'll go back and see what we can find out."

When they reached the ship, Sonny and Scotty were still on guard. Sam was detailed to relieve Sonny, so he took his place in front of the mangroves, fairly itching for something to shoot at.

"Anything doing, Sonny?" asked Andy.

"Not a thing except that I think they must be watching us through the trees. Scotty was all upset while we sat there. He hasn't stopped growling since we took our sentry-go."

"Wait till Brewster finds that the treasure is probably on this side of the island," laughed Joe. "He'll sure be wanting to change ends

with us as soon as he has a chance to size things up. He picked out the best landing place for a seaplane, figuring that he'd have the whole island to himself and plenty of time to hunt around in."

"Have you found the treasure?" demanded Sonny, excitedly.

"Not yet, ivory top," said Andy. "But we have a pretty good idea of the direction in which we'll be walking to find it. And it is this side of the mangroves; that much seems sure. Now you toddle along to your set and see what you can hear about the storm warning. Come on, Joe, let's get out one of the compasses."

They walked into the control room and removed one of the three compasses from its gimbals. As they passed Sonny's cabin on the way back to the door, he held up his left hand in a beckoning gesture, while his right hand was racing across a pad.

"He's getting a report," whispered Andy, "Let's wait."

The moving pencil stopped. Sonny tore the sheet from the pad and handed it to Andy.

"Listen, Joe," said the pilot, as he read the message. "'From Station WIOD, Miami, Florida. Advisory from Washington. The tropical disturbance was central at eleven o'clock this morning twenty-five miles north of Point Lucrecia, on the northeastern coast of Cuba. It is of considerable intensity and accompanied, near its center, with winds approaching hurricane force. It is now moving slowly in a northerly direction. Unless it changes its direction, it is not expected to strike the Florida coast.'"

Joe listened attentively, then whistled softly through his teeth.

"Guess we'd better have a look at the chart, old man," he said, walking toward the control room. He bent over the hydrographic chart and studied it intently. Then he looked up at Andy. "If it continues in its northerly course, it will pass well to the eastward of us," he said. "We'll have winds of from fifty to seventy-five miles an hour here. If it should swing to the northwest, it might pass very close to us, even directly over us."

Andy was silent, his fingers tracing invisible lines on the chart.

"I wonder if we could learn of its change of course in time to beat it?" he speculated.

"It's hard to tell," said Joe. "After it has left the Cuban coast, the Weather Bureau will lose track of it until it reaches one of the radio stations on the Bahamas, unless it happens to pass near some ships which would report its direction and intensity by radio. It's not likely that ships will report it again, though, for there is no through shipping route directly in the storm's path until it gets north of us."

"In other words, we won't know whether it is going to strike us or pass to one side of us until it actually does it, eh?"

"It's more than likely, although barometer readings at the half dozen radio stations scattered through the Bahamas will give the weather people a fair idea of what course it will take."

Andy faced the other two.

"Well, what do you want to do, stay or beat it?"

"Why not tie the old plane down to the ground and ride it out?" proposed Joe.

"What do you say, Sonny?" asked Andy.

"Stay."

"Good for you!" exclaimed the captain. "We'll spend the next couple of hours cutting stakes——"

"We have some heavy tent stakes in the lockers, and some rope, too," interrupted Sonny.

"Great! We'll use them and cut more, too. We'll anchor the old ship by the running gear and the fuselage. We'll head her into the wind. The windmill will start turning if the wind begins to get strong. We'll have to tie the flippers to hold the tail down. She'll make one hundred and fifty miles an hour in the air, so she ought to stand a two-hundred-mile gale, at least, without falling to pieces. How does that strike you?"

"Fair enough," agreed Joe. "If she starts straining at her ropes, we'll start the engines and let them turn over against the wind. That'll help."

"Maybe we'll wish that we had played safe when the breeze starts blowing," laughed Andy, "but I'd sure hate to beat it and leave the island to Brewster and his cutthroats. Let's go out and get Sam's vote now."

So together they walked out to the man and the dog who watched the mangroves. Andy explained the situation to him, not neglecting to tell him that there would be considerable danger in remaining and that there would be plenty of time to take off and leave if they started now. Sam listened patiently. Then he cast a venomous glance toward the mangroves behind which Brewster and his companions had taken shelter.

"Here's my suggestion," he said. "You birds leave me some food and water and plenty of ammunition for my gun. Then you beat it and come back when the storm is over. While the wind blows I'll play tag with my old buddies there. We'll have a good time here together."

"Why, you old Zeppelin!" roared Andy. "We'd have to drive in a lot of tent pegs and

tie you down. You'd blow away at the first gust of wind!"

"Which reminds me," said Joe. "I wonder if Brewster has had warnings of the storm?"

"Personally," replied Sam, "I hope he hasn't. I'd like to see his plane picked up and blown all the way to Europe. Then, on our way home with the loot, we could fly over Nassau and drop a letter to the Governor that an escaped prisoner from London was sitting down here, waiting for free transportation back to the jug!"

"Aren't you the spitfire?" marveled Joe. "You look as sweet and cunning as a nice big kewpie, but your real disposition would sour condensed milk."

"Only when I think of Brewster," retorted Sam. "Do you know, I'm beginning to work up a real hate on that fellow."

CHAPTER XI

THE ATTACK

Much to Sam's disgust, the other three members of the crew decided that they could not wait to prepare and eat a hearty lunch. They each went about their duties in preparation for the hurricane and the treasure hunt, eating sandwiches, as they worked.

They drove long stakes deep into the ground in the form of a large cross. This, Andy explained, was in order that they might turn the *Flying Windmill* to face the wind without having to drive in a new set of stakes. They tied ropes to the stakes and coiled them neatly on the ground so that at the last minute, when they knew which direction the wind would come from, they could make fast to the undercarriage and fuselage of the plane without much delay.

Everything aboard the ship was put in order as if they were about to start upon a long flight. Sam oiled and greased his engines and made sure that they were in perfect condition. Sonny and Scotty resumed their duties as sentries in front of the mangrove thicket.

Joe and Andy, after inspecting the entire ship with the utmost care, took picks, shovels, compass and a few short stakes and walked back to the bluff on the eastern end of the island to begin their task of surveying for the location of the treasure.

"How queer everything looks!" exclaimed Andy, as they stood upon the high, sandy bank overlooking the lone rock. "The sea is absolutely smooth except for those high rollers. There seems to be a very thin veil over the sky. And when we were here an hour ago, it was just about the clearest day I've ever seen."

As he spoke, one of the long rollers broke with a crash against the foot of the bluff and sent a whipping sheet of spray almost to the summit.

"Whew!" whistled Joe, "where did that one come from?"

Another and another high sea swept in, then others followed which were not so high.

"I'll bet those waves are being pushed along ahead of the hurricane," suggested Andy. "Look, here come some more!"

Again a series of great waves washed up against the shore, each one higher than that which preceded it. Yet the whole surface of the ocean was a glassy calm except for the long, even rows of smooth rollers.

"Guess we'd better get to work," said Joe. "There's no telling how much time we'll have before the storm hits us."

They walked to a spot which appeared to be directly in line between the lone rock and the curving northerly point of the island, which could just be seen over the tops of the mangroves. Placing the compass on the ground, Andy sighted across its rim until the point's bearing could be taken. Then, without disturbing the compass, he went around it and sighted at the rock.

"Too far to the south," he muttered.

He carried the compass a dozen yards to the north, set it down and took his bearings again. This time he was just a trifle too far to the north. Three times he was forced to move the compass before the readings assured him that rock and point were exactly opposite and that he was standing right on the invisible line which connected them. Then, laughing excitedly, he drove a stake into the ground at the edge of the bluff.

"Here we are, Joe!" he shouted. "Unless the island has changed shape, we're at the place where we start that measuring, or pacing, or whatever it is."

"Listen!" cautioned Joe, holding up his hand.

From the direction of the point behind the mangroves came the sound of a roaring motor.

"I wonder if Brewster is beating it away from the storm?" murmured Andy.

"I shouldn't wonder. It would be the most sensible thing for any of us to do," replied Joe.

The throbbing sound increased in volume, mounting to a steady hum.

"He's taking off," said Andy, listening.

The black shape of the seaplane appeared above the mangroves. Andy, acting with sudden inspiration, seized the hatchet and drove the stake he had just planted deep into the sand, so that not more than half of an inch of it projected above the surface. The seaplane banked over the sea, then headed straight toward the *Flying Windmill.* It was hurtling just over the tops of the mangroves, flying wide open.

As it screamed over the clearing, its coffin-shaped pontoons seemed scarcely higher than the four-bladed rotor atop the silent autogyro. Then, above the drumming of its engine, Andy and Joe heard a fusillade of shots.

"Quick, let's go back!" cried Andy. "They're attacking Sonny and Sam!"

As they began to run, they saw the seaplane tilt over in a vertical bank and again fly over their plane. Another burst of gunfire cracked through the steady droning of the engine. It was difficult for the running flyers to make speed. The soft, ankle-deep sand pulled at their feet. When they had covered fifty yards, their

mouths were open, their lungs laboring for air. They could now see the *Flying Windmill* clearly. As the seaplane rocketed past, they saw a tiny flash of crimson stream up from the control room window of the autogyro. It was answered immediately by a volley from the seaplane.

Then, suddenly, Brewster's ship zoomed into the air, wheeled around on one wing tip and headed toward Andy and Joe. They could hear the shrill shriek of the wind through its wires and struts as it roared across the open stretch of sand.

"Andy!" panted Joe. "Turn right. Into the palm grove."

Almost exhausted, the boy looked toward the edge of the palm grove. It was fully thirty yards away. He doubted if he could make it, so difficult was the running through the heavy sand. But he turned and forced his tired legs to carry him in a final burst of speed.

The thundering of the seaplane's engine almost deafened him. He felt, rather than saw, the thing swoop upon him. Without pausing in

his stride, he flung himself flat upon his face. A terrific blast of wind swept across his back. He heard the heavy barking of automatics. He heard bullets smack into the sand beside him. Then the plane was gone. He picked himself up. Brewster was zooming for a turn. Joe, standing still in his tracks, was firing coolly at the rising seaplane. Then, as he emptied his automatic, Joe dashed across the few remaining feet to the nearest of the coconut palms and dropped to the ground, exhausted. Andy staggered against one of the smooth trunks and leaned against it, gasping for breath. The seaplane was returning. It dived at the clump of trees. The two flyers rolled behind the shelter of the trunks and heard the plane whistle across the top leaves, which rattled under the wind blast of its propeller.

Then it was flying toward the autogyro again, so close to the ground that it carried a cloud of sand in its wake like a tiny tornado. Andy and Joe glanced at each other.

"We've got to stop that somehow," said Joe, slipping a fresh clip in his automatic. "If they

keep at it long enough they'll hit Sonny and Sam."

"Let's run for it," suggested Andy. "If we can all get together in the plane, we may be able to make it too hot for them."

The palm trees rattled again. The long slender trunks swayed. The rattling became louder and louder until it drowned out the sound of Brewster's engines. The narrow leaves began to blow straight out in the sudden gust of winds until they looked like streamers in front of an electric fan.

"Look at that squall come across the water!" shouted Andy. The gently curving bay beyond the mangroves had changed color. It was now greenish-gray, spotted by angry, tumbling whitecaps. The two staring flyers watched the ocean become blotted out by a curtain of gray haze that was drawing closer and closer. They could not see the bay now. It had dissolved even as they had looked at it.

"That's the first squall of the storm!" cried Joe.

With one accord the two scrambled to their

feet and began to race across the sand toward the plane. The wind pressed against their bodies. They leaned against it as they ran. They saw Brewster's plane, in the midst of a turning bank, tip wildly, and for an instant they thought that it would crash. But the wings slowly leveled out and it turned toward the beach from which it had come. Then its outlines grew dim and disappeared in a driving wall of rain that was sweeping across the narrow island. The two runners could hear the sound of its engine as it fought its way through the wind and rain.

The solid wall of rain caught Andy and Joe on the last fifty feet of their dash. For an instant it blotted out the outline of the *Flying Windmill.* But in the few seconds before the autogyro had disappeared, Andy had seen Sam and Sonny leap from the cabin and begin to work, lashing their ship to the ground. The rain beat into Andy's face as though he were running against the stream from a high-pressure fire hose. He was soaked to the skin in the first five seconds. The wind was coming

in gusts of ever-increasing power. The boy knew an instant of utter discouragement. Before he could reach the plane it would be blown away. He was sure of it.

And then he saw its great gray bulk in front of him. He almost plunged full tilt into the massive shock absorber under the right aileron.

"Andy!" came Sonny's voice at his feet.

Andy looked about him, confused by the rising shriek of the wind, the steady roar of the rain and Sonny's voice coming from so near at hand.

"Here," called Sonny. "Help me with this line."

Then Andy saw the youngster, crouched over one of the tent stakes not five feet away. In a flash Andy was at his side, winding the rope which led from the stake up and around the axle of the wheel. He groped for other ropes and swiftly tied them to the wheel strut. The huge balloon tire was moving slightly as the entire ship slid backward, an inch or two at a time, under the mighty blows of the wind. The lashings became taut as the plane pulled

against them. Andy tugged and strained at the ropes, hoping against hope that they would hold. He wondered where Joe had gone. But he was too busy to wonder for very long. There were other ropes to make fast.

And then, before they had completed their task, the wind and the rain ceased as suddenly as it had begun. The sun blazed down at them through a widening rift in the clouds. It was as if the entire squall had been a dream. Behind them, sweeping away toward the sea, the gray curtain of rain was as solid as a wall. As it moved on, the palm trees came into sight, glittering in the sun and looking very fresh and green. Andy stared at the sight in astonishment. But the sunlight lasted only a moment or two. Then it was obscured by a thin layer of streaky cirrus clouds which, except for a few small breaks, covered the entire sky.

CHAPTER XII

THE HURRICANE STRIKES

"Well," said Andy, patting his wet, clinging clothes, "that squall just about saved our lives, but it's a new kind of a blow to me. I thought it was the hurricane itself."

Sonny, wet and bedraggled, his hair plastered to his head, his clothes sticking to his thin body, shook the water from his eyes.

"Gee, Andy," he said in a shaky voice, "I was afraid Brewster had shot you or the storm had blown you away! I thought you were never coming back!"

Andy threw his muscular arm around his friend's slender shoulder.

"Don't you worry about me," he laughed. "I always come back."

Sam appeared around the bow of the plane.

Andy looked at him and burst into shouts of laughter.

"If you don't look like a cat that has fallen into the washtub!" he cried.

Sam looked ruefully at his coveralls which fitted his bulging form like a bathing suit.

"Aren't you the pleasant little thing to have around!" he retorted. "Here we get shot at, our plane nearly gets blown out to sea, we almost get drowned and you appear and start making wise cracks!"

Joe appeared at the cabin door. He looked down at the three flyers, then toward the northeastern sky.

"Why don't you fellows come up here and get dry clothes on?" he asked. "It may be all afternoon before we have another squall."

They suddenly became aware that the afternoon had turned terrifically hot and stultry. The haze over the sun seemed to prevent their clothes from drying upon them. So they accepted Joe's suggestion with relief.

"How did you get inside the cabin, Joe?" asked Andy, curiously. "The last I saw of you

was when that rain hit us. I thought you had gone around the ship to help Sam make her fast to the stakes."

"No. Just about the time I reached her side, I heard that queer fluttering noise that the windmill makes when it is turning. I looked up and saw it whirling around at a great rate. I was afraid that she'd take off in a minute or two, so I jumped aboard, ran up to the control room as fast as I could and spent the rest of the time holding the wheel down against the instrument board. I've tied it there now, so we won't have to worry about it again."

"Why, I was only afraid that the wind might blow the ship backward," exclaimed Sonny. "Do you mean to say that she would really have taken off?"

"You bet she would," Joe assured him. "What's the difference between the windmill spinning around from wind pressure blown back by the propellers and wind pressure blown against them by a gale? They were whirling around plenty fast enough for her to have taken off."

"If the real blow hits us," mused Andy, "that's about the chief danger she has to face, eh?"

"That and the wind shifting so it blows against her side. In that case, she'll turn over."

"I've fixed the stakes so that all we'll have to do is to shift a rope or two and she'll be able to swing around into the wind."

"That's all very fine unless it blows too hard for us to get out and shift them," replied Joe.

"How much damage did Brewster's shots do?" asked Andy.

"They bored through the fuselage in a dozen places," replied Sam. "Boy howdy, we had it pretty hot for a few minutes! If he'd made a dozen more trips over us, he'd have hit us just by accident. Couldn't have missed hitting if he fired enough shots."

"You'd better get some linen and dope and patch the bullet holes," Andy told him. "If the hurricane should really strike up full force, the wind might get into the tears in the fabric and rip the covering right off her."

Sam, who was now dressed in a dry suit of coveralls, departed.

"Sonny," said Andy, "I think you'd better take Scotty and stand watch again near the mangroves. I hope Brewster kept right on flying until he reached Florida, but I'm afraid there'll be no such luck."

Sonny called to Scotty, who shook himself for the dozenth time and followed the young radio operator from the room.

Andy and Joe spent an hour driving additional stakes into the sandy ground and adjusting the rope anchors to suit them. The veil of cirrus clouds over the sky had thickened, little by little, until the afternoon had become quite gray. The wind was coming by fits and starts from the northeast, increasing in power as the afternoon wore on. From the beach came the heavy pounding of surf. At four o'clock another squall blew across the island, bringing with it another terrific rain. The entire crew retreated to the cabin to wait for the blow to cease. The *Flying Windmill* vibrated and rocked uneasily, but seemed secure enough at

her moorings. Then the wind ceased. But the rain continued. Throughout the rest of the afternoon water whipped against the sides and roof of the cabin with a roar that made speaking in ordinary tones impossible. At length the flyers became used to it.

"No more treasure hunting until after this is over," Andy said as an early darkness closed in upon the island. "I'd give a lot to know what Brewster and his buddies are doing right now."

"Just what we're doing, most likely," replied Joe. "Sitting in the cabin of their plane waiting for fair weather. No one who didn't have to would venture out in this rain."

The cabin of the *Flying Windmill* seemed doubly cheerful when they listened to the steady rattle of the rain beating against the doped fabric. The lights had been switched on and the rooms were dry and cozy. Sam strolled into the kitchen and in a few minutes the others could hear him whistling cheerfully as the odors of broiling steak and frying potatoes trickled through the corridors. Sonny went

into his radio room and busied himself with his instruments. In a minute or two, the sound of a man's voice burst from the loud speaker which was fastened to the wall of the main cabin.

"This is Station WIOD, Miami, Florida. We are now about to broadcast the latest information received from the local Weather Bureau. The tropical disturbance which was central this morning just north of the Cuban coast is moving steadily northward with gradually increasing intensity. Nassau, in the Bahamas, reports a barometer reading of 28.40, a fall of nearly an inch since last night. Hurricane warnings have been ordered between Daytona and Cape Hatteras and storm warnings south of Daytona to Key West. Unless the storm changes its course, Miami will feel winds of no greater force than thirty-five to forty miles an hour. We will broadcast the latest weather reports every half hour and will be on the air all night."

As Sonny twisted his dials the speaker clicked and roared. Then there came the sound

of dance music, jazzy, infectious and gay. Somewhere people were dancing who did not know that there was a hurricane whipping distant seas, threatening the lives of people in its path, and endangering, even, the very existence of entire cities and towns. Those whose feet could be heard shuffling in time to the band were thinking only of their own enjoyment, not knowing that ships struggled for their very lives in storm-lashed seas and that thousands of people, perhaps millions, were listening to other and quite different radio broadcasts, trying to learn whether they were to experience the terrors of a hurricane.

"It's a funny thing, Joe," said Andy, thoughtfully, "but in my own way, I'm quite as happy as those people who are dancing to that music. I know very well that if that storm hits us full tilt, I may be scared pink. But in the meantime, I can't see it as anything but a new kind of adventure. I'd hate to take off and run for Florida."

Joe nodded thoughtfully.

"I feel the same way about it," he said

quietly. "Only I wish the thing would break if it's going to. I feel just like I did when I was looking into Brewster's automatic, waiting for him to pull the trigger and have it over with."

Outside the wind was beginning to rise again. It shrilled at the wires and struts with a low musical note which rose for brief intervals to a high-pitched shriek. But the sound was constant and became, at last, a thing to be taken for granted, like the unceasing beat of the wind. Presently the flyers, snug and dry in the brilliantly lighted interior, became so accustomed to it that they scarcely heard it at all.

Sam announced dinner and the boys dined to the sound of a band playing from the restaurant of a fashionable New York hotel. The steak was crisp and charred on the outside, rare and juicy inside. The potatoes were fried to perfection. He had even heated the rolls and served them with tiny square pats of golden butter on bread-and-butter plates. Each gleaming water glass was in its proper place, every dish flanked by its proper array of pol-

ished knives, forks and spoons. As the flyers fell to eating with noisy enthusiasm, it was difficult for them to remember that they were on the ground. The ship moved uneasily in the gusty wind. The whistle of the storm outside might have been the progress of the *Flying Windmill* through the sky; the rattle of the rain might have been the droning of throttled engines.

The rain suddenly ceased just as Andy and Joe left the table. Sam and Sonny, having drawn two short straws, had turned toward the kitchen to begin the job of clearing the table and washing the dishes. Andy opened the cabin door and looked out into the night. The wind was still strong but there was a cool fragrance to the air, a bracing odor straight from the ocean that Andy sniffed with delight. He looked up at the sky. Somewhere behind those low-hanging clouds was the moon. Its light outlined masses of heavy cumulous clouds that raced across the heavens in jumbled masses that looked to be scarcely higher than the topmost leaves of the palm trees at the end of the

island. They were gorgeous but, somehow, terrible. For the first time, Andy was conscious of forces in the threatened storm that were almost too powerful for humans to combat. He stood there, gazing up with wide eyes.

From the bay beyond the mangroves came a familiar sound that cut through the eerie whine of the wind.

"Joe!" Andy called. "Brewster and his gang are still there. That's their engine."

Joe listened as the noise rose and fell.

"They are testing it or warming it up," he said. "I wonder if they've decided to run for safety. They'll never make it."

Then the curtain of rain swept toward the *Flying Windmill* from the bay. Andy slammed the door as the deluge crashed against the covering of the fuselage. With the rain came more wind in great screaming puffs. And between each puff the steady roar of it seemed louder and more furious than before. The plane trembled restlessly. From the kitchen came the clatter of plates and from the dining room the jazzy strains of the dance band.

CHAPTER XIII

A SLEEPLESS NIGHT

As the evening wore into night, the wind increased in strength until the cabin reverberated to its roaring. The plane trembled like a thing alive. By midnight its force was so great that none of the four sleepless flyers believed that it could possibly blow harder than it was doing at that moment. But in the next hour its banshee shriek was far more shrill, the uneasy vibration of the plane far more noticeable. And as a background to all the noises of wind and ship was the steady drumming of the rain against the sides of the cabin.

Conversation within the rooms was almost impossible because of the tremendous volume of sound. Sonny turned the radio set to its full volume. With ten tubes hard at work, the loud speaker outshouted the storm, and the dance

orchestras of a dozen cities played to the boys in the storm-stricken plane and helped them to forget the horrors of the night outside the cheerful cabins.

There was no thought of going to bed. No one knew whether the peak of the storm was upon them or whether there was that to come which would make the now-existing wind feeble by comparison. So they sat restlessly in the living room, listening to the loud speaker and trying to forget the tempest that raged outside the few inches of spruce and fabric that sheltered them.

Andy occupied himself by trying to write a log of the flight for the factory officials, describing the action of the autogyro in the air on the way down from New York. Joe wandered uneasily from main cabin to the control room and back again. Sam and Sonny played a two-handed game of rummy. Scotty lay down very close to Andy's feet and dozed, waking at frequent intervals to listen to the howl of the wind and then to press hard against his master's legs for comfort and protection.

At last Andy rose, donned a suit of coveralls, buttoned them closely about him and walked toward the outer door.

"Where are you going, Andy?" asked Sam, laying down his cards.

"I'm going out to inspect the ropes," replied the boy. "We'd be in fine shape if she were to break loose now."

The other three rose instantly and prepared to follow him out into the storm. He shook his head.

"We can't all leave the plane," he said. "There's a chance that she might take off and there would have to be somebody aboard to fight her back to the ground. Joe, you'd better stay in the control room while I'm outside. Sonny, you stay here with Joe. If you want another ducking, Sam, come with me and give me a hand at the ropes. Get a flashlight. We may need it."

Joe opened his mouth to protest. Then, without a word, he turned and walked forward toward the control room. Sonny followed him. Sam found a flashlight in his room and made ready to venture out with Andy.

It required the full strength of both of them to push the door open against the pressure of the wind. The moment they forced it open, the howl of the wind filled the entire cabin, drowning out the radio speaker and the sound of their own voices. Andy leaped to the ground. As he landed on his feet, the wind toppled him over and he rolled several feet before he was able to claw into the wet sand with arms and legs and stop himself. Before he had even touched the ground he was wet to the skin. Stepping out into the storm was like leaping, fully dressed, into a swimming pool. The water filled his eyes and blew into his partially opened mouth. As he spat it out he noticed that it left a salty taste. Then he realized that the wind was picking up sea water and hurling it completely across the island.

He could not see Sam. The blackness of the night and the volume of falling water made it almost impossible to see his own hand before his face. Although he stood near enough to the plane's fuselage to be able to put out his hand and touch its fabric, the lighted windows above

his head showed only a dim blur, as if he were looking up at them through a thick fog.

For an instant he remained on his hands and knees, bracing himself against the gale. Then, very carefully, he began to crawl toward the wheels. It seemed a long, long time before he reached the left wheel and touched its bulging balloon tire. He held the flat of his hand against it for a moment. It was moving slightly. It rolled a few inches backward, then, as the wind eased for an instant, it moved forward again. He was thankful, however, that there was no up-and-down motion. The autogyro was not trying to take off. The lashed-down controls were holding her wheels to the sand.

Something bumped against him. He was startled. Then he knew that Sam had found his way to his side. The mechanic put his mouth to Andy's ear and shouted at the top of his voice:

"Listen to that surf, Andy!"

Andy had realized that there had been a steady booming sound beneath the screech of the wind and the slashing of the rain, but he

had not stopped to listen to it. Now he paused and paid attention. Yes, it was the surf, an unceasing booming that was like continuous thunder on a hot summer's night. He wondered what Brewster's seaplane might be doing in the clutch of those mighty waves. But there was no time to worry about that. He turned to feel of the ropes. That was the important thing now; to be sure that the autogyro was securely anchored. Nothing else mattered for the moment. Nothing seemed to exist except the plane and those who depended upon it for their safety. Everything else in the howling, screaming darkness seemed not to be a part, somehow, of the world of spruce, fabric, lighted cabins and friendly men to which Andy belonged.

The boy's groping hands touched a triple strand of rope which led from the long stakes to the axle. It was as rigid as a steel bar. He ran his hands downward until they met the stake itself. He felt of it and measured its distance above the ground itself. It had not lifted a fraction of an inch. Good! If the stakes

began to pull loose from the ground, it would be the beginning of the end. Sooner or later they would all jerk out and the *Flying Windmill* would have to take her chance with the elements. That was not pleasant to think about.

The next stake was firm, too, and the next. The ropes hummed in the wind, adding their song to the mighty uproar of the night.

Sam's flashlight glowed in a faint cone of incandescence. The rain drove straight across the white beam like millions of motes of diamond dust.

"Ropes all right on other side," yelled Sam in Andy's ear.

They fought their way back to the cabin door. Since the ship was headed into the storm and the wind was at their backs, they had a fearful struggle to prevent themselves being hurled to the ground and rolled beyond the tail structure and thence out into the night. Andy was not sure that they would be able to find the plane again, once they had lost her in the seething whirlpool of wind and water. They clambered into the cozy cabin, breathless

and exhausted. Their few minutes out in the storm seemed like a nightmare.

Sonny dashed into the room, his eyes glowing with relief.

"Oh, Andy!" he cried. "We were right on the point of going out after you. It didn't seem possible that you could still be alive."

Andy glanced at the clock on the wall and was astonished to learn that they had been outside nearly three-quarters of an hour.

"I'm going to jump into something dry," said Sam, "and then we're going to eat. It's nearly three in the morning and time for an early breakfast."

After changing his clothes, Andy went into the control room. The stout non-shatterable glass windows were pointed right into the storm and the place was in an unbelievable uproar of noise. Joe was sitting in his pilot's seat, watching the air-speed meter on the instrument board. It indicated a speed of ninety miles an hour. A steady whirring sound from above told Andy that the windmill was whirling around and around in an effort to lift the

great ship from the ground. Had the controls been at normal, she would have taken off in an instant.

The boy slipped into the seat beside Joe. Together they watched the vibrating pointer on the air-speed meter as it measured the strength of the wind sweeping across the island. The windows were as black as though they had been painted on the outside. Solid streams of water washed over their surfaces. That was all that was visible.

The wind seemed to be gaining in strength as the hours dragged by. Just as Sam brought in a huge tray of hot bacon sandwiches and coffee, the air-speed meter indicated a wind of one hundred and three miles an hour. There was a definite lift to the ship now. The flyers could feel her surge upward for a few inches. Then, as the gust died down, she would drop back to the ground.

Sonny and Scotty came into the control room. They did not wish to remain alone in the cabin. They sat down on the floor beside Sam and were glad of the companionship of the others in the small, darkened room.

As the next gust began to lift the already terrific roar of the storm to a wild shriek, Andy reached forward and cut in the starter switch to the bow engine. The wind beating back against its propeller assisted the starter. The engine spat out a burst of crimson flame which was instantly wiped away by the hurricane. Even the noise of the exhaust was lost in the bedlam of noise. Andy shoved forward on the throttle and the propeller ate into the wind, doing its best to hold the ship against the hurricane. The air-speed meter indicated one hundred and five miles an hour. Andy switched on the two wing engines and opened the throttles halfway. In still air they would have pulled the plane ahead at fifty or sixty miles an hour. Now they were cutting down the backward pressure of the wind by that amount. The lashed-down control wheel held the nose against the ground as though the plane were diving. Gust after gust, blast after blast, shook the plane from stem to stern. Andy, sitting with his hand on the throttles, his eyes on the air-speed meter, adjusted the speed of the engines to the speed of the wind, while the others sat

silent, watching him and listening to the terrific volume of sound that buffeted against their ears.

And so the night wore on. The hands of the clock dragged around and around the dial slowly, so slowly that whenever they looked at it they were sure that it must have stopped. Had it not been for its illuminated dial, they would have lost all track of the time.

Gradually the absolute blackness outside turned to a dark gray, then to a lighter gray. But the storm showed no signs of abating. The rain swept across the land in a series of driving showers. Now and then the curtain of water would lift for a few brief minutes and the flyers caught glimpses of the palm trees bent double in the blast, their fan-like tops nearly touching the sand. Then the rain would close in again and they could see nothing.

Joe relieved Andy at the throttles. At six-thirty Sam staggered across the swaying floor to the kitchen, where he prepared another breakfast. They ate it in silence, scarcely knowing what was in their mouths. Even Sam had

lost his enthusiasm for food. He swallowed his eggs, toast and coffee because he knew that it would give him strength for whatever emergencies the day might bring forth.

The engines were running at two-thirds speed now, and at full speed during the frequent gusts that tore at the plane. The windmills were whirling as though the plane were flying. In the midst of the squalls, the wheels bounced up and down on the ground until the entire ship bumped like a motor car on a rough country road.

At seven o'clock the rain again ceased. But the air-speed meter indicated a wind of one hundred and eight miles an hour. The three propellers were eating into the wind which threatened to overwhelm them. There came a sudden cry from Sonny, who was standing at the window, gazing out at the clouds which, scarcely higher than the island itself, were hurling themselves across the gray-green sky.

"Look, fellows!" he shouted. "Look!"

He was pointing directly in front of the plane. His three companions rose and stared

out. There, not a hundred yards away, was a tremendous mass of yellow linen and black wood, rolling over and over in the clutches of the wind. It resembled nothing they had ever seen before, but, as it bounced and cartwheeled directly toward the *Flying Windmill,* it seemed like some frightful thing which was bent upon the immediate destruction of the autogyro and its entire crew.

It collapsed, a shattered horror of whipping fabric, then seemed to pick itself up and bound toward the plane again.

"It's Brewster's ship!" yelled Andy, staring at it spellbound, unable to move hand or foot to save himself, his crew or his plane.

The thing had lost all resemblance to a seaplane or to anything else. The engine had been torn loose and had been left somewhere in the twisting path of the wreck. A sound like the rattle of machine gun bullets banged against the anchored plane's windshield as sand, scooped up by the wreck, was whipped along by the thundering storm. The mass of wreckage was suddenly lifted high by a tremendous

blast of wind. For a heartbreaking instant it seemed to hover over the *Flying Windmill.* The four flyers cowered in the control room, holding their breaths, waiting for the crash that would end everything. They waited and waited, wondering why they were not dead. Then, slowly, they lifted their heads and looked at one another. The wreckage had been whirled completely over the anchored plane. Their lives had been saved by a whim of the hurricane.

Andy laughed shakily. Then he became sober. Where were Brewster and his crew? Had they been caught in that wreck when she had been blown loose from her moorings? He wondered at himself that he should have the slightest feeling of concern for them. Time and time again the man had tried to knock Andy out of the air. Yet the boy's few terrible moments facing that whirling wreck had caused him to pity anyone who might have died in its midst.

The rain closed in again. The wind's screech was unending. It wore at Andy's nerves. He

felt that he would have given anything he possessed if it would only cease for an instant so that he might not hear its noise. He felt that he had been listening to that same shriek for years and years, and wondered what the world would sound like if it should cease. He began to believe that it never would cease, that it would go on and on until the end of the world, as much a part of life as the air and the water and the green trees.

And then, suddenly, it did cease. In one moment he was wondering if he could stand another minute of it and in the next, it simply was not there. Andy wondered if he had suddenly been stricken deaf. He looked at the others. They were staring around as though they did not believe their senses. And just as suddenly as the wind had snapped off, the black clouds swept away from the sun and left a sky of dazzling, brilliant blue. Andy blinked in the intense brightness, dazed by the sudden change.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BRASS-BOUND CHEST

Joe stretched forth a weary hand and switched off the motors. No one spoke. They were too overwhelmed by the events of the night, too amazed by the suddenness of the storm's ending.

"I must grease the engines," muttered Sam in a far-away voice.

He stumbled out of the control room like a man walking in his sleep. The others rose and stood about as though they could not think what to do next.

"We ought to go and hunt for Brewster and his gang," said Andy, slowly.

"Yes, and get potted for our pains!" added Joe, bitterly.

"I don't like those crooks any better than you do," declared Andy, "but I'd hate to leave

this island without knowing whether they are dead or injured. If they were all right, I'd fly off and leave them, but if they were hurt I'd want to take them to the hospital."

"Well, let's take another look after that treasure," proposed Joe. "Now that we know where to start, it ought not to take long to see whether it's there or not. Then we can take off, fly around the island and see what's happened to our friends, Brewster's outfit. After that we can fly home and I, personally, can knock off a heap of sleep when you're at the wheel."

"Fair enough," agreed Andy. "Let's get the tools and be on our way. Sonny, you and Sam had better toddle along with us. If we really do find the gold, we'll need all hands."

Sonny shook the sleep out of his eyes and rose. Sam was standing beside the center engine, screwing up the handles of his grease pump. He promised to follow the others just as soon as he had finished his work.

Ten minutes later, the three flyers were standing beside the peg which Andy had driven

into the ground to mark the site of the invisible line, the starting place for their measurements.

"Andy," exclaimed Sonny, "did you ever see anything look as queer as the ocean?"

The others had been so intent upon finding the peg that they had not even glanced at the sea. Now they turned to look at it. It was, indeed, an extraordinary sight. Instead of being grooved by long, even waves, it was dancing, leaping with waves which seemed to run in every direction. And, more astonishing still, the tide was so far out from the shore that it exposed a slimy, seaweed-covered beach nearly half a mile in width where before the storm the water had reached to the very foot of the sandy bluff.

"We'd better get busy, Andy," said Joe. "That water has been blown away from the shore by the hurricane. When the wind changes, it will come back with a rush. It might even sweep in in a tidal wave. So let's not waste any time."

"All right," said Andy. "Let's start our measuring. We'll try paces first. If that

doesn't bring us to the treasure, we'll try fathoms. I wish we knew exactly what system of measurement they used in the old days."

Joe placed the compass in Andy's hands.

"Here, Andy," he said, "you walk beside me while I pace it off and see that I am walking in the right direction. Let's see, now. The first notation is N. 40. That's north and I hope it's 40 paces. Let's go." Stepping carefully and slowly, so that he might not veer away from a line toward the true north, he took forty steps and dug his heel into the soft ground. Sonny, following, drove a stake into the hollow made by his heel.

"Now the map says SW. 120," muttered Joe. "Come here, Andy; let's get a bearing on that compass."

He sighted directly across the compass card, faced exactly toward the southwest and began to stride over the sand, counting, as he walked. Then, as before, he stabbed at the sand with his heel.

"Here we are," he said, quietly. "If the map is correct and the island hasn't changed

shape, the treasure should be right under my heel."

"Out of the way, boys and girls," came Sam's excited voice. The others had been so interested in watching Joe's measurements that they had not seen the fat mechanic arrive. "Give me that shovel, Andy, and I'll give you a lesson in high, wide and fancy shoveling. I can smell the money down there, I tell you, so let me at it."

He grabbed the shovel and, with powerful strokes, began to make the sand fly. The others, conscious of a tremendous tension as the hole grew deeper and deeper, stood by breathlessly. The perspiration flowed from Sam's chubby cheeks as the shovel rose and fell. His enthusiasm was contagious. Andy seized a pick and began to loosen up the ground in front of the flying shovel. Deeper and deeper became the hole. Even Sam's face began to show signs of disappointment.

And then there came a sudden sharp click as Andy's pick struck something hard.

"I've hit something!" he gasped, not daring

to believe that they had come to the end of their search.

"Look out!" shouted Sam, as the keen edge of his shovel sank to the shaft where Andy had withdrawn the pick.

Half a dozen strokes and Sam uncovered the brass-bound corner of an ancient chest. He did not hesitate. His shovel moved sand like a steam dredge. Soon the entire top and sides were exposed. The box was very, very old. Its oaken sides were discolored, its brass tarnished. Leather handles on each end were rotted and useless. But there remained no doubt in the minds of the flyers that they had indeed found the treasure. Sam attempted to lift the lid but the massive padlock held firm.

"I don't want to break the box here," he said, doubtfully. "We'd better take it back to the plane."

Andy's shoulder was suddenly seized in a grip of iron.

"Quick, fellows!" shouted Joe, turning Andy to face the ocean. "The sea is coming in, and coming fast!"

Andy took one look at the water. As far as the eye could see, it was a mad whirlpool which seemed to be rushing forward as if to sweep over the entire island. The new beach had disappeared. The surf was even now hammering at the foot of the bluff. But even more terrifying than the incoming surf was the appearance of the southeastern sky. A tremendous mass of black clouds which extended from the very surface of the sea to miles and miles in altitude was scudding toward the island.

"The storm's coming back!" yelled Andy. "Run for the plane!"

"Grab this chest, you birds!" called Sam. "We'll carry it back. No use having come here for nothing."

Each of the four seized a corner of the heavy chest.

"Heave ho!" shouted Sam.

They all strained at the chest to wrench it from the clinging sand. One corner sagged. It was Sonny's.

"Gangway, big boy," panted Sam. He pushed Sonny out of the way, turned his own

back to the box and dug his big hands through the sand which surrounded the bottom.

"Let's go!" he shouted over the rising scream of the coming wind and the hollow booming of the curling seas.

Joe and Andy raised their end. Sam's face grew purple. Veins stood out on his throat, temples and forehead. His body swayed forward, strained upward. Then the box broke free from the sand. Sam, staggering slightly, began to plod toward the plane which was hidden from sight by a small clump of palms. Joe and Andy had all they could do to carry their end of the chest. As they lurched after Sam, they wondered that one man could lift so great a weight.

Sonny, trudging beside the brass-bound chest, felt very small and useless. He glanced behind him at the oncoming storm. The sky, which but a few minutes before had been a dazzling blue, was now a boiling mass of whirling clouds which blotted out the entire southern horizon. The sea was covered with whitecaps which seemed to be leaping up to meet the

clouds. Already the palms on the end of the island were bending their supple trunks in the first blasts of the wind. And from the direction of the clouds and the sea was an ever-increasing roar as though all the wild animals in the world were loose behind that black curtain.

He looked ahead at the plane. How tiny she looked, sitting there in the open clearing! It seemed hardly possible that she had already lived through the howling hurricane that had torn at her all through the night. And it seemed even less possible that she could again withstand the terrific wind which now threatened her.

The slowly moving procession had covered no more than two-thirds the distance to the *Flying Windmill* when the first gust of wind struck them. It came in the midst of a small tornado of whirling sand and driving sea spray. It hit them with such force that Sonny was blown flat on his face. The other three, anchored by the weight of the chest, stumbled, but did not fall. They leaned back against the wind, waiting to see if Sonny could rise. The

boy scrambled to his feet, twisted his pale face into a grin and walked on, digging his heels into the sand at every step so that he might not be forced into a run that he could not halt. The others resumed their march, almost invisible in the cloud that surrounded them.

The crossing of that last twenty yards seemed to take forever. They were all afraid that the plane would capsize before they could get to her. The returning storm had caught her broadside to the wind and she was bucking and rolling like a small boat in a heavy sea. Her windmill was whirling like an electric fan. She had already pulled away three of the stakes which anchored her to the sand and was slowly veering around to head into the blast like a weather vane. As the flyers reached her, she jerked out another stake. She careened, seemed about to upset, then straightened out, her bow a little closer into the wind. The four flyers, gazing horrified at the stakes which were failing, one by one, knew that in a few moments she would no longer be anchored to the

ground, that she would be whirled away at the mercy of the wind.

For an instant, Andy hesitated, not knowing whether they would be safer on the ground or in the ship. He knew now that the calm weather of the last hour had been only the lull, as the exact center of the hurricane had passed directly across the island. They had lived through but half the storm. He doubted whether the ship could survive the remaining half. They might be wiser to try to dig themselves into the sand here and hope for rescue after the hurricane had blown over.

He glanced across the island toward the milling clouds. Then his eyes opened wide in amazement. From just beyond the palm grove, a wave reared its white-capped head and hissed across the sand for a hundred yards before it subsided. Just behind it, another sea rolled in. The white surface of the ocean seemed to have lifted until it was as high as the greater part of the island itself. The waves swept in at a dozen places and began to cut around the sloping hill which led to the sand bluffs. Soon they

would be rushing across the spot where the flyers now stood!

"Quick, fellows!" he shouted. "Into the plane. Never mind the chest. Get in."

Quick as a cat he turned and seized Sonny by the collar and the waistband. Joe, after one startled glance at the approaching sea, opened the cabin door. Andy, with a tremendous swing, tossed the boy up into the doorway.

"Get in there, Joe!" he ordered.

Joe leaped for the door, swung himself inside and started toward the control room.

"Sam, quick!" snapped Andy.

The fat mechanic grinned. He spread his pillar-like legs wide apart in the sand, bent over and gripped the front corners of the chest. For an instant, he remained in that position. Then, slowly, his back straightened as he lifted the box into the air. He swayed forward toward the cabin door. The bottom of the chest slammed down on the sill. Sam pushed. The treasure was aboard! His red face broke into a wide grin. Forgetful of storm and danger, forgetful that the ship itself might be in a thou-

sand bits within the next few minutes, Sam turned to Andy, winked insolently, then vaulted in after the chest.

The three engines were clicking over, spitting crimson flame and oily smoke. A long, smooth slick of water ran across the sand like a river and lapped at Andy's feet. The squall had passed over but another was coming, bringing with it a gray curtain of rain that had already cut the palm grove and the end of the island off from Andy's view. The southern shore had changed shape. What had been a quarter-mile of sand was now a vast, curving bay which was moving swiftly toward the autogyro. Another river crawled swiftly out from the advancing shore line, heading in wide curves toward the opposite shore. It looked like a mammoth snake twisting and sliding on and on until it dived into the water on the north beach. In a moment there would be no island at all!

Sam was crouched on the doorsill, reaching out to seize Andy. But the boy dodged away from the hand that would have lifted him aboard. He whipped out his jackknife and

dived for the stakes and ropes which anchored the plane to the sand. Sam, leaning far out of the open door, watched him. One after another of the taut ropes snapped as the keen blade ripped through their strands. Now there were only two left. The rain and the wind had almost reached the ship. Already the wheels were lifting and dropping, lifting and dropping. They would tear loose in a moment.

Andy straightened up and plunged toward the door. He could hear the engines thundering, full out. Good old Joe! The wind struck him. He staggered, fell to his knees and crawled against it, fighting his way toward the cabin door. The rain hit him in a solid sheet which flew straight with the wind like an arrow shot from a bow. It tasted like salt water. He closed his eyes against the stinging impact of it. He suddenly realized that the plane was moving. He would never make the door. The wind and the rain had beaten him. The plane was leaving him behind.

Then he saw two great feet and two enormous legs straight in front of his face. He felt

himself being lifted as though he weighed nothing at all. He was flying through the air. He landed with a dizzying crash. Someone seized his legs and pulled him across the floor. The floor was tipping and bouncing. He gathered himself together, wiped a wet sleeve over his eyes and sat up. Sonny was standing beside him, his face deathly pale. Sam was just climbing over the doorsill, a look of immense relief on his broad face. The fat man pulled himself inside and slammed the door.

Andy rose and staggered toward the control room. It was as dark as night. The instrument board was glowing softly. The windows were gray blanks. Joe was sitting in his seat, his right hand on the throttles. Andy sat down beside him. The noise in the little room was deafening. The roar of the engines, the rattle of the rain and the terrific howl of the wind combined to make an uproar that almost paralyzed the brain.

The bouncing of the wheels against the sand threatened to shake the ship to pieces. The entire plane vibrated and shook as though a

thousand men were beating upon her fabric with drumsticks. This could not last. Andy knew that no ship ever built could stand such punishment more than a few minutes. He wondered if the surf was beating against her tail structure. There was no way of telling, of separating one noise or one bump from another.

He drew a deep breath as he made his decision. He was responsible for the lives of Sonny, and Sam and Joe, his wonderful friends who had sailed over the Seven Seas with him. Well, he was doing his best. He knew they would not complain, even if he were to lead them to destruction.

With a steady hand he reached out and slipped the knot that held the control wheel hard down against the instrument board. The instant that the wheel was free it swung back to neutral and began to vibrate in short, swift little jerks. He captured it and held it steady. The bumping of the wheels against the sand ceased. They were straining upward now as the whirling rotor tried to pull the plane off the ground.

Andy felt for the throttles. They were two-thirds open. He shoved them forward, giving the three engines all the gas they would take. The plane steadied for an instant. Then, with an upward sweep that was like the starting of an express elevator, she pulled loose from her anchors and careened upward into the very heart of the hurricane.

CHAPTER XV

A FLIGHT FOR LIFE

Had the *Flying Windmill* been a plane of ordinary design, she must have crashed at once as the wind tore at her and hurled her this way and that. But her whirling fan bit through the twisting currents of air, creating lift for the great ship where none would have existed for wings, holding her up where she would have dropped to the ground like a falling stone, leveling out the rising and falling eddies which would have capsized any other plane in the world.

Andy struggled with the wheel and the rudder bar as the ship careened crazily through the whirlwind of air. Joe's strong arms and legs came to Andy's assistance and together they did what they could. There were times when they seemed to be heading straight

toward the sky. In the next minute they were apparently diving directly toward the ground. They lost all sense of direction, straightening her out automatically as the instruments on the panel reflected her position in the air.

There was neither sky, ground, nor horizon. All was lost in that gray-black curtain that pressed against the windows. There was nothing in the world outside the cabins but the storm which was trying to pull the ship to pieces and carry the bits away in its clutching fingers.

The pilots made no effort to steer in any given direction. Their only thought was to keep the plane in the air. Whenever an instant came when she became level and manageable, they turned her toward the westward and the coast of Florida. But in the next moment she was rearing like a frightened broncho and they allowed her to head as she wished.

The altimeter was like a thing gone mad. Now it would read two thousand feet. Then it would indicate that they were below sea level. They lost all confidence in it and strove to

climb, climb, whenever they could. That was all they could do. If they could not climb fast enough, they would crash. That was all.

The steady beating of the engines was like the beating of their own hearts. If any one of the three Apex motors ceased its regular purr for a moment, they were lost. So they just sat there, working the controls automatically, hoping that Sam's faithful care of his engines would reap its reward.

They lost all track of time. Time did not matter. The clock on the instrument board ticked away unnoticed. If they looked at it at all, it was with eyes that did not register the hours and minutes. It was only the turn-and-bank indicator, the spirit level, the tachometers and the pressure gauges that had any meaning for them. These they watched, concentrating their entire minds upon their messages, for it was by means of these that they had been able to survive thus far.

Andy and Joe suddenly became aware that Sam and Sonny were in the room. They were sitting upon the floor, because they could not

stand against the violent motion of the plane. Andy turned his head and saw the dim figure of Scotty lying there between them. He was facing aft, staring down the corridor as though guarding his four friends from whatever danger might attack them from the rear.

Andy was glad that they were all together there in the little room. The storm was so immense, the forces of nature so overwhelming, that he took comfort from the mere presence of other humans near him. His elbow touched Joe's as they tugged and strained at the wheel and the contact seemed to give him strength. He lost the feeling that he, Andy Lane, a mere boy, was fighting single-handed against something which was far, far too vast for him ever to conquer. He lost the feeling that all his struggles only postponed the end a little while longer. He put new strength, new determination into his battle to conquer the very elements.

He glanced around at Sonny and Sam and Scotty for a second time. Then he started in astonishment and looked at them again. Yes,

he had not been mistaken. The soft light from the instrument board was glinting on the blued-steel barrel of an automatic in Sam's huge hand. Sonny, too, was holding a gun. Had they lost their wits?

There was no time to ask questions. The plane was tilting far over on her left side. Andy and Joe fought the ailerons and nosed down to bring her back to normal. He could not have asked questions had he wanted to. No human voice could have carried through that din. He gave it up. The danger of crashing was so much greater than any other danger could possibly be, that the matter of the guns did not seem of much importance. Here was a moment's breathing space. They must head to the westward again. As if but one mind were controlling the actions of both, Andy and Joe turned the bow toward the west. They could not hold it there long. The storm soon whipped them about at right angles to their course. But every inch toward the Florida coast would help. It was better than just dancing about until the gasoline became exhausted and the sea reached up for them and dragged them down.

The entire control room suddenly flashed crimson and a deep-throated roar echoed from wall to wall. Andy looked over his shoulder just in time to see Sam's automatic flame again. The vivid knife stab of fire streamed toward the after end of the corridor. That was all that Andy could tell. Sonny raised his heavy gun in both hands, took careful aim and pulled the trigger. The report crashed against Andy's eardrums like the impact of a bullet.

Sonny turned his head and saw Andy staring at him. Bracing his two hands against the wall, the youngster pulled himself to his feet and staggered across the reeling floor. A sudden twist of the ship nearly threw him down. He grabbed the back of Andy's chair and held on, bending down until his mouth was almost at the pilot's ear.

"Brewster and his men are aboard!" he shrieked. "They were hiding in the fuselage when we got in. They came out and tried to shoot us but the plane was jumping so their shots went wild. We escaped. They hold the whole rear end of the ship."

Then he was gone, crawling along the floor

to resume his place beside Sam. In the next momentary lull, Andy relayed the message to Joe, who nodded and turned back to his wheel and rudder pedals.

The rain ceased for a few minutes. It was a relief not to hear it drumming on the fuselage. The *Flying Windmill* hurtled out of a cloud and immediately dived into another. But the two pilots had had a glimpse of the sea below and were reassured to find that they had climbed to nearly five thousand feet. The surface itself was raging with tremendous whitecaps, which broke like surf on a beach. Straight lines of creamy foam stretched across the ocean as far as the eye could see, indicating that the wind was screaming down there even as it was a mile in the air.

Then blackness closed in upon the *Flying Windmill* and the rain slammed against the fuselage. Twenty minutes later she plunged through another opening in the clouds. Andy and Joe saw a great white steamer far on the ocean below. She was hove to, her bows headed into the wind. Huge white seas swept

over her decks and crashed against her upper structure. Her masts swung from side to side in tremendous arcs as she rolled wildly in the cross-crossing waves. From her single funnel a thin string of smoke stood straight back in the wind. Andy stared at her, wondering that a tiny ship of the air could survive when a sturdy ship of the sea was so harried by the elements. And then she was gone. The clouds again surrounded the *Flying Windmill* as she fought for mileage to the westward.

Joe leaned over and shouted in Andy's ear.

"I wish Sonny could get to the radio. We could get our position from that steamer. There's no telling where we are now."

"She was a United Fruit ship," yelled Andy. "We aren't very far off the coast."

"Good thing," replied Joe. "We can't have much gas left."

Andy noted that Joe had said nothing about the presence of Brewster's gang aboard. Joe's mind worked that way. One thing at a time. Right now the *Flying Windmill* must be fought through the storm. Then it would be time to

do something about their enemies. Meantime, he would trust to Sam and Sonny to keep Brewster out of the control room.

It seemed to Andy that the motion of the ship was becoming somewhat easier. Either that or he was becoming more accustomed to correcting her wild lurches. His arms and legs ached. He was tired, tired in every muscle of his body. Even his eyes were tired from staring at the gauges and dials. He remembered now that none of the crew had slept a wink all night. It seemed to him that he had not slept for weeks and that the storm had been raging for days and days. He found it difficult to remember any time when there had not been a hurricane. He pushed and pulled and kicked at the controls automatically, as though his arms and legs were operated by machinery instead of by his own brain.

"She's flying easier!"

Joe's voice roused him. Yes, she *was* flying easier. Of course, she rolled and pitched violently but after what they had been through ever since they had left the ground at Hook

Island, it seemed as though she were flying in calm skies. There was no longer the tearing rip and jerk of the controls against his arms and legs. She answered her wheel and rudder promptly, easily, as a good ship should. It would even be possible for one man to fly her alone. So now there was another matter to be attended to.

"Can you hold her, Joe?"

Joe heard him, although he had scarcely raised his voice. The scream of the storm had lessened so that very little of its noise penetrated the insulation of the room. Joe nodded. Andy took his hands from the wheel, his feet from the rudder and sat for a moment to see if Joe were able to handle her.

Then he reached across Joe's lap and removed the automatic which was still in the pilot's leg holster. He rose and stretched until he could feel the life coming back into his numb arms and legs. He was ready for action.

CHAPTER XVI

THE TREASURE

Andy cocked the gun and walked across the swaying floor to the door. He peered around the corner, looking past his own room, the radio cabin and that used by Sam and Joe. The entrance to the main cabin, which occupied the entire width of the ship, was just beyond. He could see no one. So, stepping carefully over the two who guarded the control room, he walked slowly down the corridor.

He heard Sam and Sonny getting to their feet behind him but he did not wait. He peeked into his own little cabin. It was empty. So was Sonny's radio room. Then he heard a shout of laughter from the main cabin. He tiptoed toward the arched entrance, glancing into Sam's room as he passed. Reaching the end

of the corridor, he crouched to the floor and looked around the corner of the door.

There in the middle of the floor were Brewster and his three companions, gathered around the open lid of the brass-bound treasure chest. They were all staring down into its interior, one of them shouting in excitement. As Andy watched them, Brewster leaned over and reached into the box. When he raised his hand, it was filled with gold coins which he allowed to pour back into the chest. The others quickly dived into the box, pushing one another aside to be the next to wash their hands in the yellow gold.

"Hands up!" shouted Andy, charging into the room, his gun aimed full at Brewster's chest.

For a long second, the bandits were motionless. Brewster raised his head, saw the gun and lifted his hands. The others straightened up, staring at Andy. The young pilot saw a signal flash from Brewster's eyes to those of one of his companions. The bandit leader began to lower his hands.

"Put them up, Brew—" began Andy, his gun rigid.

And then something swished through the air. Andy heard it coming at the same time that he saw one of the others turn on him. He ducked swiftly. The butt of a Lueger automatic glanced off the side of his head and hit him a shocking blow upon the left shoulder. He staggered, dropped his gun and almost fell. He saw Brewster's hand drop to his side coat pocket. He plunged at his enemy and threw himself against Brewster's knees. The two went down with a crash. Andy tried to seize Brewster's gun arm with his own left hand but his arm was numb from shoulder to wrist. He could not raise it. He reached for the gun with his right hand, but Brewster twisted it away. The gun was swinging slowly, surely, toward Andy's body.

The boy fought silently, the breath whistling through his clenched teeth. He was aware of shouts, of the stamping of feet, of shots roaring through the room. The whole place was in an uproar. Someone tripped over him and fell

heavily to the floor. Andy's whole attention was upon that gun. He had Brewster's right wrist now. Quick as light, the man shifted the gun from one hand to another. Andy lunged at it but without his left arm he was frightfully handicapped. He knew, as he struggled there, that he could not stop that gun from pressing against his side.

Amid all the noise and confusion he heard a snarl and the rush of padded feet. Scotty's body flashed past his face. Brewster screamed as the dog's fangs closed on his wrist. The gun clattered to the floor. Andy grabbed it and pushed himself to his feet.

Sam and Sonny were in the midst of a pitched battle with the other three bandits. Andy saw Sam's right arm swing upward and around in a long arc. It hardly seemed to touch the chin of the man who was aiming a gun at him, but there was a sound like the cracking of a heavy whip. The man's head snapped back. His knees sagged and he pitched backward to the floor. Two men were standing in front of Sonny's gun, raising their hands above their

heads. As soon as it had started, the battle was over.

On the floor, Brewster lay motionless. Scotty was lying across his body, his muzzle close to Brewster's throat, as though he were waiting for his master's word to finish the bandit off then and there. Brewster's face was bloodless, his eyes staring with terror. On his left wrist were the semicircular marks of the dog's teeth.

"Take him off me, Andy Lane!" cried Brewster.

"Lock those men in my stateroom," snapped Andy. "Watch him, Scotty!"

The dog's bushy tail thumped against the floor. He did not move, nor did Brewster. At the point of the gun, the three bandits were herded into the stateroom. One of them wore his arm in a sling. That, Andy remembered, was the red-headed man who had tried to set fire to the *Flying Windmill*. Sam stood at the door, his gun ready for use, while Andy took the key from the inside of the lock and inserted it on the outside.

"Wait a minute," said Andy. "I'll bring Brewster in. Shoot them if they start anything."

He walked back into the main cabin. Scotty still guarded his captive.

"All right, Scotty," called Andy.

Scotty did not wish to get up. He looked straight into Brewster's face as though he were just about to attack him again. Then he rose and walked to Andy's feet, where he wheeled about to face his enemy.

"Get up, Brewster!" snapped the pilot.

Brewster, his face a strange mixture of fear and hate, pushed himself to his feet. He stood there, swaying to the motion of the floor, waiting for Andy to speak.

"How did you get aboard this ship, Brewster?" demanded Andy.

"We came to capture her during the lull in the storm. You weren't aboard her. When I saw the hurricane coming back I did not dare try to fly her. I've never been in an autogyro. So we hid in the fuselage until you took off. When the storm hit us, we thought she was

going to crash, so we came out. Allen and Sonny Collins saw us before we could take them prisoners, or we'd have the ship right now. And you would be flying it for us."

"Brewster," said Andy, slowly, "I'm really tempted to kill you. You are a cold-hearted crook and as slippery as a snake. You haven't a decent thought in your brain or a kind act in your heart. How you broke out of prison, I don't know. You're going to have another chance at it, because if we succeed in flying this plane back to land, I'm going to turn you over to the police. And I'm going to tell them that you broke out of a London jail. The chances are that you'll be back in that same jail as soon as a steamer can take you there. Now don't answer back! I'm at the end of my string and I can hardly keep my finger from tightening on this trigger. Get going now and make yourself at home with your buddies until we either land or crash."

For an instant Andy thought that Brewster would spring at him. Scotty bared his teeth and snarled. The man looked at the crouching

dog. His muscles relaxed. There was no more fight in him. Without a word he walked to Andy's stateroom and entered. As he crossed the sill, one of Sam's snowshoe-shaped feet shot upward. Brewster flew across the little room and crashed into the wall.

"Just a little love pat, sweetheart," called Sam as he closed the door and locked it.

Scotty lay down in the corridor, his nose almost at the edge of the door. He had made himself guardian of the portal. The boys knew that no other sentry was needed.

"Sam," said Andy, turning away, "find out how much gas we have. Sonny, you get busy with your radio and try to get our bearings. Then we'll figure out where we are and how far we can go from here."

As the others went about their duties, Andy hastened toward the control room. He knew that the ship was flying more easily. The fairly steady motion of the floor under his feet was proof of that. The blackness outside the cabin windows had changed to a light gray. As he stepped into the control room he saw a

tiny patch of blue sky between two clouds overhead.

Joe's face was anxious as he turned to see who was entering the room. When he saw Andy, he smiled contentedly.

"I knew you'd get 'em, kid," was all he said.

CHAPTER XVII

SAM MAKES A DECISION

"We have just gas enough for two-and-a-half hours of flying at full speed," announced Sam when he entered the control room.

"Cut her down, Joe," directed Andy. "We can make our westing, now, without any trouble. We'll go along at easy cruising speed. That's give us nearly five hours more in the air on the gas we have left."

Sonny entered, a slip of paper in his hands. He passed it to Andy without a word. The young captain read the figures of latitude and longitude scribbled upon it and compared them with the charts. Then he whistled a long, drawn-out note of astonishment.

"Listen, you birds," he shouted. "We're over land right now. We're just to the north of Jacksonville, over some of the tidal marshes

that stretch between that city and Brunswick, Georgia."

"What do you think of that!" whooped Sam. "If it weren't for getting our tootsies wet, we could land right now, couldn't we?"

Andy looked out of the window at the gray masses of clouds that surrounded them.

"We sure could," he admitted. "In this plane we could just squash down through this cloud bank and come to rest right in those swamps without breaking a strut. But that isn't what we're going to do. Sonny, you beat it back to your static box, try to get one of your amateur radio fans in Savannah and ask him what the weather is like there. If the clouds are on the ground, call Wilmington, North Carolina."

As Sonny dashed out of the cabin, Sam made a low bow.

"Please, Mister Captain, " he said, "your crew hasn't eaten for so long that if you don't do something about it pretty soon, I'll go into your cabin and come out gnawing on Brewster's leg bone."

"I expected you'd be yapping about food now that we're not going into a tail spin," laughed Andy. "Don't you want to look over our treasure before you cook dinner?"

"Well," muttered Sam, "between being hungry and wanting to know how rich you are is a sweet problem, isn't it? The money will keep, but my appetite won't. That's the way I feel about it."

"Go ahead and cook us a meal, then. I'm hungry, too. What about the prisoners?"

"I've got some good old Navy hard-tack and some wonderfully refreshing water for them," replied Sam. "If they want more than that, they can start eating each other."

He disappeared in the direction of the kitchen. Sonny returned to the control room with word that the sky was perfectly clear at Savannah. The Weather Bureau there, he said, was expecting a storm within twenty-four hours but no sign of it had yet appeared.

"All right, Sonny," said Andy. "Two more messages and you are through until after lunch. Send one to the Chief of Police at Savannah

that four dangerous prisoners will be turned over to them at the airport in about three hours. Send another to Mr. Avery, at the Apex factory. Tell him that we found what we were looking for and that we are stopping at Savannah for gas on our way home. Ask him to have the landing lights at Mineola turned on for us after dark."

"Wow!" yelled Joe. "Here's the sun!"

At that moment the *Flying Windmill* burst through the gray clouds and emerged into clear sunlight which flooded the cabin with its brilliant, life-giving rays. The three flyers gazed at it as though they had never seen the sun before. They looked down at an endless expanse of earth, wide ranges of marshy land, ruler-straight highways and, far to the right, a glittering sheet of blue water which seemed to extend to the very end of the world. For an instant, no one spoke.

"Well," sighed Andy, at last, "I can understand why the heathen are sun worshipers. I never saw anything that looked so good in my whole life!"

"All I have to say," declared Joe, "is that the next time we hear anything over the radio about a 'tropical disturbance,' we don't go looking for new experiences by flying straight into it."

"I'm cured," admitted Andy. "All right, Sonny, beat it now and send your messages."

Half an hour later they were eating lunch in the control room. After the experiences of the night, they wished to be together, so did not eat in shifts at the big table in the main saloon. Sam and Sonny, in the highest of spirits, sat on the floor, while Andy and Joe sat in the pilots' seats and balanced trays upon their knees. It was a gay meal. All thought of sleepiness was forgotten. They forgot, too, the horrors of the night and the morning. The sky was blue, the sun shone and the air was calm. That was all that mattered, now.

"Tell you what let's do, fellows," suggested Sam, stealing the last of the sandwiches. "Let's drag the chest out here and see what's in it while we're all together."

His idea was received with enthusiasm. He

and Sonny pulled the heavy chest through the corridor into the control room.

"You've done the heavy lifting on that thing, Sam," said Andy. "If it hadn't been for you, we'd have to leave it on Hook Island. So you dig out the stuff and we'll have a look at it."

So Sam, willing enough, began to empty it of its contents, piling the loot on the floor beside it. And as they watched, the flyers' eyes grew larger and rounder with amazement. First came three double handfuls of gold coins from a bag that Brewster's men had broken open in their eagerness.

"Pieces of eight!" shouted Sam, cutting a dance that looked like nothing in the world so much as a baboon trying a turkey trot. "Golden doubloons, pure gold, boys!"

There were nine more bags of them, which he lifted out, one by one and placed on the floor. There were three long pouches full of gold dust. There came next twenty heavy bags of large silver coins, all stamped with Spanish inscriptions. And last, but most important of all, was a small bag which, after the heavy coins,

seemed strangely light. Sam cut open the cord, inserted two huge fingers and drew out a tiny parcel wrapped in wad cotton and paper. He unrolled the wrapping, stared for a moment at the thing in his hand and then held it forth for the inspection of the others. It was a ruby as big as a walnut, perfectly shaped and flawless.

"Wow!" gasped Andy. "That's worth thousands and thousands and thousands! Why, we're all rich men!"

Sam was opening other little paper-wrapped parcels. Each of them contained a precious gem, sapphires, more rubies, garnets. Suddenly he began to wrap them again and to stuff them back into the pouch.

"I'm dizzy already," he declared. "I've seen enough. We'll take them all to Tiffany's tomorrow and have them appraised. Even after giving that baby Briggs his share for lending us the map and dividing the rest of it four ways, we'll still be simply rolling with money. And I, whoops, dearies! I'll be able to order my yacht! Zowie!"

Again he pranced his ungainly dance around the room.

"Yes," grinned Andy. "You'll be able to order your yacht, all right, but what will you do with it? You'll just be starting off on a world cruise, or something, and you'll learn that an Apex ship is taking off for somewhere. Then what'll you do?"

"I'll have a fast airplane and a catapult on the after deck," stated Sam, grandly. "And when you need me, I'll fly to you from wherever I may be!"

He was busily engaged in restoring the loot to its place in the big chest when he was suddenly struck with an idea.

"Say, Andy," he said slowly, "if I owned a yacht, I'd have to have a big crew and everything, wouldn't I?"

Andy nodded. Sam's face fell.

"And if I wanted to cook a real meal down in the galley," he continued, "it wouldn't look very well, would it?"

They all hooted with laughter.

"Well, then," Sam decided, "I guess it's all

off. I'd better stick to flying with the old outfit. Sonny, you static hound, go and bring me my bag of tools, will you? I hear my engines calling me!"

THE END

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